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HOMELESSNESS IN LOS ANGELES

ONE PUNK'S GUIDE TO GARDENING

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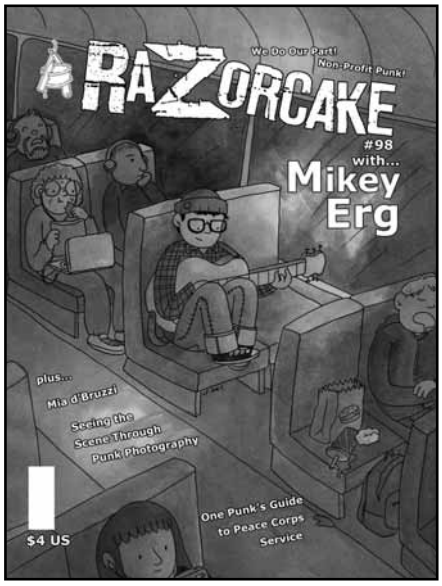

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IF WE DON'T RIGHT THE SHIP SOON, SOMETHING DRASTIC!! COULD HAPPEN TO RAZORCAKE!!
RAZORCAKE IS FACING TROUBLE. RECENTLY SEVERAL MAGAZINE DISTRIBUTORS WENT OUT OF BUSINESS. THEY OWE RAZORCAKE MONEY THAT WE WILL NEVER SEE.

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Signs of Strength in Weakness

I have no idea what you think of Razorcake.

As its co-founder, constant contributor, and now executive director, I'm unsure how to effectively convey the severe challenges often weighing on Razorcake. I do know this (and it's not sour grapes): If everyone I came in contact with who said they enjoy and respect what Razorcake does, got a subscription, we wouldn't be facing our current challenges. That's part of a disconnect much larger than Razorcake. It's a shift in view that at once promotes artistic expression while tearing it down by devaluing the actual labor poured into that work. Yet, there's little hesitation in purchasing expensive electronic equipment. (A phone for hundreds of dollars? *Sure*. A phone contract starting at around forty dollars a month? *Okay*. A subscription which amounts to 672 pages a year of exclusive creative DIY punk content made independently of corporate interests sent directly to your door for seventeen dollars? *Sounds difficult*.) If this paragraph could convince one thousand people to get subscriptions, Razorcake would have secure financial footing unparalleled in its history.

I'm a hopeful person, but I'm not delusional. One thousand people won't subscribe just because I ask them in writing.

This year started out super shitty for Razorcake. I discovered in January our bookkeeper, in his own words, had "given up" and sloppily made $8,000 worth of mistakes while handing us clean-looking monthly reports. What he first logged in as a $4,000 profit for the year turned out to be a $4,000 deficit. He acted bored and anxious to leave when I pointed out his critical mistakes. I fired him, fixed his fuckups, and hired a much more competent bookkeeper.

In February and March, two key distributors for Razorcake abruptly went out of business. One sold *Razorcake* in Los Angeles's newsstands. Another was a stalwart of DIY punk for close to thirty years. Razorcake was on a downward tilt because parts of the landscape it's intertwined with had cratered.

My blessing and curse is I can see multiple alternate outcomes, several steps down the line. I can't see into cool futures with flying cars or purely fucked dystopias with murdering robots, but for the past seventeen years, I've been able to help steer Razorcake through a convoluted maze that's produced—on time, mind you—ninety-nine issues without putting a penny on credit, without taking out a loan.

Something had to be done to keep this slip from being a slide. I give full credit to Daryl Gussin. He came up with the plans that now provide the good ship Razorcake with ballast once again. On the page to the left is the $150 sponsor-a-space plan. Please give it a read, consider doing it, and sharing it. Daryl also administered the June Subscription Sale, where ten issues of Razorcake were available for only seventeen dollars. It was the single biggest subscription boost we'd ever experienced. (If you still haven't gotten a subscription, I can't underscore how important they are to us.) We're back on the right track, but will only remain on it through constant push and vigilance.

We're at a new vista, yet rest assured any cash is used for sustainability. It's money, not only to publish *Razorcake*, but to build other long-term programs—like podcasts featuring independent punk music, hosted by DIY punks, and printing stand-alone photocopied zines with the photocopier we initially thought we had enough money for last year (and paid for outright).

I'm humbled by the initial support of readers and fans. When Razorcake showed weakness and asked for help, so many responded with kindness and generosity instead of shrugs of indifference or torches of fury. Thank you.

–Todd Taylor

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"I know that there are no limits to which the powers of privilege will not go to keep the workers in slavery." –Mother Jones

Diego Rae Framingheddu
Born 4/25/2017

Photo by Rachel Murray Framingheddu

THANK YOU: Every song didn't just land, it killed thanks to Canderson for the cover shot of Bad Sports; Tag team Razorcake in the style of Randy "Macho Man" Savage thanks to Codey Richards for his illo.; Who knew celebrating Ramadan would shine Todd Congelliere/Bollywood/Selena hybrid weirdness in a new light? Search "Sherihan fawazeer" thanks to Bone Dust for his illo. in Donna's column; Nosferatu wants a play date on the second story thanks to Bill Pinkel for his illo. in Jim's column; What's the punk factor with polka dots on itsy bitsy bikinis? thanks to Alex Barrett for his illo. in Nørb's column; Dale was a poser when he was seven. Fuck you, Dale thanks to Marcos Siref for his illo.; Button eyes and nails in stitched softness thanks to Roque Torres for their illo. in Puro Pinche Poetry; Drum sticks to scale, rodents and fowl miniaturized thanks to Jim Newberry for his photo in Chicken's column; Live old, die responsible thanks to Mitch Clem and Nation of Amanda for the illo. in Jennifer's column; It's cheaper than therapy… and you get tomatoes thanks to Jon Mule, Adrian Tenney, Eriko Kitajima, Jennifer Whiteford, Jessie Lopez, Kristen Ritzau, Vanessa Tiscareno, and Dylan Davis for the One Punk's Guide to Gardening article, photos, and layout; Organized, planning ahead, responsible parents, using music as exercise and exorcizing, and getting turned away at a suspiciously empty-looking "at capacity," L.A. bar thanks to Rosie Gonce, Alison Green, Canderson, Bernie McGinn, and Jessee Zeroxed for the Midnite Snaxxx interview, photos, and layout; It's one of the worst societal Gordian knots we're facing with no easy solutions—thanks to Cheryl Klein and Becky Bennett for the article and layout of This DIY Project Called Survival: Homelessness, Creativity, and a City in Crisis; Grag thanks to Canderson and Gabby Gonzalez for the Bad Sports photos; "Why'd you kill Speedy?" thanks to Ever Velasquez, Becky Rodriguez, Amina Cruz, and Eric Baskauskas for the Jaime Hernandez interview, photos, and layout.

"I'm reminded of King Vidiot from the movie *Joysticks*, when he goes to Joe Don Baker's house kicking over furniture and eating a houseplant." –Matt Average, Beatniks, Self-titled EP. ***Thanks to 99's rotation of zines, books, and music reviewers: Kelley O'Death, Matt Average, Nicole X, Paul J. Comeau, Art Ettinger, Sal Lucci, Kayla Greet, Kurt Morris, Sean Arenas, Matt Werts, Chad Williams, Ty Stranglehold, Indiana Laub, Juan Espinosa, Keith Rosson, Mike Frame, Rich Cocksedge, Garrett Barnwell, Ryan Nichols, Chris Terry, Steve Adamyk, Sean Koepenick, Jon Mule, Tim Brooks, Cheyenne Neckmonster, Vincent, Theresa W., Matt Seward, Billups Allen, Camylle Reynolds, Jimmy Alvarado, Bryan Static, Mark Twistworthy, Simone Carter, Cynthia Pinedo, Nørb, Lyle, Jim Woster, Kevin Dunn, Michael T. Fournier, Craven Rock, Jim Joyce, and Tricia Ramos.***

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This issue is dedicated VLHS.

The following folks stepped forward to help us do our part over the past two months. Without their help, Razorcake wouldn't be what it is.
Todd Taylor, Daryl Gussin, Candice Tobin, Kari Hamanaka, Matthew Hart, Donna Ramone, Rishbha Bhagi, Chris Baxter, Steve Couch, Megan Pants, Ever Velasquez, Griffin Wynne, Seth Swaaley, Sean Carswell, Skinny Dan, Katy Spining, Jimmy Alvarado, Yvonne Drazan, Dale Drazan, Josh Rosa, Marcos Siref, Robert El Diablo, Mark McBride, Alice Bag, Marty Ploy, Rachel Murray Framingheddu, Rene Navarro, Billy Kostka III, Derek "The Girl with a Signature Walk" Whipple, Samantha McBride, Jason Willis, Nicole Macias, Janeth Galaviz, Matt Average, Joe Dana, Christina Zamora, Juan Espinosa, Meztli Hernandez, Sean Arenas, Adrian Salas, Adrian Chi, Aaron Kovacs, Julia Smut, Jenn Witte, Dave Eck, Tim Burkert, Jeff Proctor, Nighthawk, Toby Tober, Sal Lucci, Jennifer Federico, Kevin Dunn, Maggie Egan, Jennifer Whiteford, Kayla Greet, Marcos Siref, Steve Thueson, Cassie J. Sneider, Bill Pinkel, Kurt Morris, Laura Collins, Eric Baskauskas, Bianca, Rhea Tepp, Russ Van Cleave, John Di Marco, Michael T. Fournier, Simon Sotelo, Susan de Place, Timothee de Place, Bryan Static, John Miskelly, Genesis Bautista, Andy Garcia, Camylle Reynolds, Becky Bennett, Craven Rock, Replay Dave, Adam Ali, Chris Devlin, MP Johnson, Tim Brooks, Patrick Houdek, Louis Jacinto, Julie A. Ferguson, Chris Boarts Larson, J.V. McDonough, Isaac Thotz, Kat Jetson, Noah Wolf, Jon Mule, Chris Terry, Ryan Gelatin, Jackie Rusted, Rosie Gonce, Brad Dwyer, Rick V., Kelly O'Grady, Scotty McMaster, Rayne Blakeman, Alex Harris, James KittleKamp, Jeff Khan, Punky Bowen, Sam Grinberg, Lukas Myhan, Melanie Matranga, Holly Horsebrowns, Bungee Degrady, Ollie Mikse, Dylan Davis, Becky Rodriguez, Gabby Gonzalez, Keith Rosson, Megan Razzetti, Paul Silver, Matt Werts, Stacy Medina, David Ensminger, Danny Rust, Clara Acosta, Jamie L. Rotante, Daisy Noemi, George Lopez, Christine Arguello, Ronnie Sullivan, Cheryl Klein, Eden Kittiver, Shelby Fujioka, Jessee Zeroxed, Alice Elmer, Cheyenne Neckmonster, Michelle Kirk, Dustin Antonopoulos, Alicia Armijo, and Codey Richards.

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This issue of *Razorcake* is made possible in part by grants from the City of Los Angeles, Department of Cultural Affairs, is supported by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors through the Los Angeles Arts Commission, and has activities funded by the California Arts Council, a state agency.

It's all part of a lesson in willpower, humility, and modesty.

"Ramadan Mubarak, Ramadan Kareem"

Ramadan just began (as of writing, it will be over by the time of publication), and I've made the decision to fast this year. There have been years when I haven't fasted at all, or years when I only fasted days when I felt up to it. Thing is, how I approach Ramadan is perfectly okay. Many of us are fairly casual about fasting for Ramadan. Two years ago, fasting was going to interfere with my job and my religious dad called and insisted I not fast that year. This is from the guy who made me read the Quran during a road trip when I was twenty-nine.

As casual as Muslims can be about Ramadan, I'm annually baffled by how much other people lose their damn minds over it. No other time of the year am I bombarded with so many questions and statements, ranging from the confused to the downright racist. I would like to attempt to clear some up.

The Islamic calendar is lunar (they were astronomers, after all) and Ramadan is the ninth month of that calendar. The lunar calendar is shorter than the solar, Gregorian one, making Ramadan seem like it's always during a different time each year. The United States Postal Service issued a stamp to commemorate Ramadan one year when it was in December. People will still say to me, "Ramadan is right now? I thought it was around Christmas." Nope. Hasn't been in December since 2002.

The rules of fasting during Ramadan are simple: healthy adults should abstain from eating, drinking, sex, and being an asshole from sunrise to sunset.

No, I'm not fasting for the entire month, just when the sun is up. I eat in the morning and at night. How anyone can keep asking this really throws me off. Logically, we would all be dead. You do understand people die if they don't eat for thirty straight days, right?

Yes, this includes abstaining from water. Yes, even on hot days. Yes, it sucks during the summer. No, I have never gotten dehydrated because, again, I can drink lots of water in the morning and at night. It may seem "unhealthy" to you, but doctors aren't speaking out to end fasting practices so I think I'm safe to keep doing it. Seriously, calm down. It's only, like, fifteen hours and I'm super lazy for all fifteen of them. I've been doing this since I was a teenager; I promise I will be fine.

Occasionally, I see the internet argument that since there is an increase in attacks from some fucking political mass murderers during Ramadan, that makes Islam "inherently violent." Part of Ramadan is to ground yourself and reflect when you're being a dick. This is a reminder that terrorists, of all ethnicities, are idiot assholes who don't actually follow the religions they use to justify their behavior.

Sure, part of the point of Ramadan is to become a better person and get closer to god, but you should already be hanging out with him five times a day. Not having sex when the sun is up isn't some big "sex is a sin" thing (for once). It's about personal control and learning to understand what it's like to live without. I didn't mention it earlier, but people should abstain from smoking, too. It's all part of a lesson in willpower, humility, and modesty.

Ramadan is meant to personally remind every Muslim what it's like to be poor. Really poor. "No clean water to drink" kind of poor. We all see hungry people in our communities and it's so easy to look on from our air-conditioned homes and either condemn or pity them. Ramadan forces Muslims to really feel hunger and thirst, from sun up to sun down, for a short thirty days. After fasting for fifteen hours, I will look at a glass of water and a box of dates with so much gratitude. I will also look at my homeless neighbors with a great deal more sympathy.

The one thing I absolutely cannot stand to hear, that I always hear every Ramadan, is "I could *never* do it." If you're diabetic or hypoglycemic, then no, you probably couldn't. Usually the person behind those words doesn't have any kind of medical condition preventing them from safely fasting, though; they're simply stopped by the inconvenience of it. The time they forgot their lunch and wallet before going to work and accidently fasted was apparently enough for a lifetime.

No one is having a great time fasting. I get headaches, fatigue, and severe grumpiness. And no, for the last time, I don't lose any weight because lethargically starving all day and then binge eating rice-based dinners isn't how anyone has ever lost any weight. But if I can do it, so can anyone else. It's not impossible, I promise. I even get used to it after the first week and stop looking up lavish recipes on my phone all day.

Near the end of Ramadan is when many Muslims have started to traditionally give zakat (alms which consist of two percent of your annual income, over a certain benchmark). After feeling so hungry for thirty days, giving a small percentage of what I make to charities benefiting the needy comes naturally. Assuming people are poor through some fault of their own is not considered. The "they'll just spend it on drugs" excuse doesn't work anymore, either, especially with the uncle who acted like he was going to have a breakdown because he couldn't have a cigarette for one day.

In Arab countries Ramadan completely takes over, not unlike Christmas. Everyone only works half-days all month and break fast together over big dinners. Also like Christmas, one of the best parts about Ramadan is the television. There is a history of storytelling during Ramadan; it made its way to radio and eventually television. What better way to continue in that tradition than to have a daily running soap opera for thirty days? Seriously, having a rush of thirty new episodes of a nighttime drama once a year is intense. *Bab Al-Hara* was a soap opera about the French occupation of Syria and the entire Arab world stopped to watch. Two-hundred forty episodes later, it's regarded

The rules of fasting during Ramadan are simple: healthy adults should abstain from eating, drinking, sex, and being an asshole from sunrise to sunset.

BONE DUST

as legendary. I saw a billboard in Anaheim, Calif. advertising a satellite company offering the show—it was that huge.

There are also many other Ramadan shows. My favorites growing up were the variety shows hosted by female singers, referred to as a "fawazeer." My absolute favorite was Sherihan, and her musical variety comedy shows were utter madness that I highly encourage everyone watch a snippet of. Search "Sherihan fawazeer" on YouTube and the third one down should have a title in Arabic with the number 93 in there—that's the fawazeer opening from 1993. Trust me when I say knowing the language doesn't help make sense of what's happening.

Nothing compares to the dawn of the first day after fasting. It's Eid al-Fitr, the biggest party of the year. From before the sun is up and well after the sun is down, Muslims are dressing up, hugging relatives, giving all the kids money (side note: the day you're too old for Eid money is *devastating*), hitting up as many social events as possible, and eating non-stop. Eating a big breakfast, eating a huge lunch, getting seconds of dessert, and drinking Vimto like wine (that was an absolutely hilarious Ramadan joke I just made, trust me).

Before asking any judgy questions or acting appalled at the concept of not eating for a while, reflect a moment first. Perhaps do a quick online search on your phone for easy questions. Consider learning what day Ramadan starts and ends any year, and make dinner plans with a Muslim friend or neighbor. "Happy Ramadan" is a kind thing to say, but show you care by making the extra effort to use "Ramadan Mubarak" or "Ramadan Kareem." Or, and I know it sounds unpleasant, but maybe even go for a bit of solidarity and try to fast for a day.

…Or thirty?

–Donna Ramone

It's a miracle I didn't have a nervous breakdown.

The Neon Ones, Part 3:
The Maniac at the Window

Why do we watch horror movies?

I ask myself this question a lot because my early experiences with the genre were, quite frankly, terrifying.

In Part I of this series, I discussed how my late cousin Mark scared me half to death by screening *The Exorcist* for me when I was much too young for it. But this wasn't the first time I'd been frightened by a movie.

When I was eleven years old, *Salem's Lot* was released as a two-part TV miniseries. The movie was based on a Stephen King novel about a writer who returns to his hometown in Maine and discovers that it's being taken over by vampires.

Most horror movies shown on TV back then were chopped-up versions of R-rated flicks that had the sex, violence, and gore clumsily edited out and dubbed over. They weren't very much fun to watch. They were all tease and no release.

Salem's Lot was different. Because it was made for TV, the thrills weren't delivered via violence and gore but with atmosphere and mood. It was directed by Tobe Hooper, who also made *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, and he knew exactly what he was doing.

In the movie, a young boy named Ralphie Glick goes missing. His family thinks he's been abducted, but the audience knows the truth: he's been turned into a vampire. His brother Danny finds this out the hard way when Ralphie turns up one night, tapping on his bedroom window. Somehow Danny doesn't notice that Ralphie is *fucking floating in the air* and opens the window for him.

Now it's on and these creepy Glick Brothers are tapping on windows all over town and going on a blood-sucking rampage. Danny sets his sights on his friend, Mark Petrie, a horror movie buff with a Luke Skywalker haircut. Mark knows his monster movies and he repels Danny with a plastic cross.

What Hooper does so well with these scenes is he makes them heavy rather than scary. There are no special effects. No CGI. No gotcha moments to make you jump. Just the Glick brothers in some makeup and creepy contact lenses. When we first see Danny, we see him the way Mark sees him. However, as Danny emerges from the fog it's clear that something has changed. Danny isn't Danny anymore. In the scene, Mark is crying not because he's scared—he's the only one in the town of Salem's Lot who isn't losing his shit—but because *he knows* what's happened to his friend: he's dead.

Worse than dead. He's a fucking vampire.

*

When I saw *Salem's Lot*, I lived in a two-story house in a tree-lined neighborhood in the Virginia suburbs of Washington, D.C. My bedroom was in the basement. It was dark and cold and far from my parents' room. After watching *Salem's Lot*, I decided to sleep on the couch in the living room upstairs and down the hall from my parents' room.

One night turned into a week. A week into two. I must have slept out there for over a month. My parents talked to me about it a couple of times but I refused to go back down to the basement. Even though I felt safer in the living room, sleeping up there was no less terrifying.

Our living room had these big bay windows that any passing vampire could float right up to. Even worse, right outside the window was an oak tree whose branches would scrape the window at the slightest breeze. When cars exited the parking lot of the American Legion Hall across the street, the headlights swept across our house and the shadows of the tree's branches raked the walls.

The wind would blow, the branches would go skittering across the glass, and dark silhouettes would dance inside my living room. Every time I opened my eyes I expected to see Danny fucking Glick inviting me out for a bite. It's a miracle I didn't have a nervous breakdown.

*

My cousin Mark was a lot like Mark Petrie: a guy who was obsessed with monster movies. My cousin grew up idolizing the people who created horror movies and he made good on his childhood dream by becoming a screenwriter. *Neon Maniacs* was his first film.

Looking back it's easy to see how *Salem's Lot* might have influenced *Neon Maniacs*, which also features a character who loves monster movies. Her name is Paula. When my cousin wrote the script, Paula was originally a boy. There aren't any vampires in my cousin's movie and *Neon Maniacs* isn't nearly as nuanced as *Salem's Lot*, but I love how the kid's knowledge of the secret lore of monster movies allows her to put her fears aside and beat back the maniacs who are making her life hell. Maybe the producers of *Neon Maniacs* changed the character from a boy to a girl because otherwise the resemblance to Mark Petrie of *Salem's Lot* would be too strong.

When I watch *Neon Maniacs*, I see the resemblance between Paula and my cousin Mark. When I watch *Salem's Lot*, I feel it.

*

The drama between Mark Petrie and the Glicks comprises the subplot of *Salem's Lot*. The main action concerns a battle between a very Nosferatu-looking vampire and Ben Mears, played by David Soul, the writer who returns to Salem's Lot and tries to save it.

While watching the movie, our desire to learn the outcome moves in two directions: 1) What is going to happen? and 2) What caused this to happen? The former anticipates the future and is a basic tenet of storytelling: to tell a story in a way that keeps us guessing and holds our attention until the end. While the latter looks back and provides clues to the story's central problem that allows the hero to solve it.

This second element is so pervasive in film and cinema that the language used to describe it—i.e. backstory—has crept into the way writing is taught.

In stories that involve a break from the rules of science and nature, the desire to know what caused that rupture is particularly strong. In horror movies, it's this story behind the story—i.e. the origin story—that drives the narrative. As the narrative unfolds and the monster/creature/villain leaves more clues behind, those who seek to defeat it are able to mount some kind of defense. Even if the monster is invincible, without knowing its origins, we feel cheated.

The movie *Salem's Lot* begins in Guatemala, where Ben Mears says to Mark Petrie "They've found us again." Then the action movies two years into the past when Ben arrives in Salem's Lot. By revealing that some really bad shit happened in Maine that caused him to flee all the way to Guatemala, the filmmakers double down on

BILL PINKEL

It's been over thirty-five years since I first saw *Salem's Lot*.

The damage has been done. The fear has been encoded into my DNA.

the importance of the origin story. The entire movie is an attempt to answer the question, "What the hell happened?" The resolution is complicated and slow-developing, worthy of the mini-series treatment it received, even though it makes several radical departures from the novel.

Unfortunately, *Neon Maniacs*, is extremely disappointing when it comes to backstory. As I mentioned in Part II, there simply is no origin story. We know the maniacs live under the bridge, only come out at night, and disintegrate when exposed to water. These elements make for an entertaining ninety minutes as we watch to see whether or not Paula, Natalie, and Steve will defeat the maniacs or be destroyed by them, but at no point does it endeavor to answer the question "Why?"

I have a copy of my cousin's script, but it's the shooting script, meaning it's the version of the screenplay that was used when the movie was filmed. The elements of the story that the producers purged—the setting of the story, the gender of the character based on my cousin—aren't in this version of the script. I have plans to speak with people who were intimate with early drafts of the story, but I suspect the most intriguing answers exist in my imagination.

*

It's been over thirty-five years since I first saw *Salem's Lot* and I'm still haunted by the Glick Brothers. The damage has been done. The fear has been encoded into my DNA. It's part of who I am.

Even after all that time, *Salem's Lot* is still a heavy movie for me. My cousin's career was cut short by severe brain health issues, and in the weeks before his death, I remember feeling a lot like Mark Petrie, helplessly watching as my cousin's illness transformed him into something unrecognizable, something dangerously un-Mark-like. But the knowledge that saved the day in the movies couldn't save my cousin in real life.

This is why it's taken me so long to write this. My cousin took his own life in June of 1997. For twenty years, I've tried to tell his story. It is far easier to invent the origins of the monsters he created than it is to write the backstory of my cousin's life in a way that will provide you, me, or anyone that knew and loved him with a satisfying ending.

To those who are disappointed by *Neon Maniacs,* I say, "Imagine how I feel." As frustrating as it is watching the monsters lose for no reason, it's even worse when they win.

–Jim Ruland

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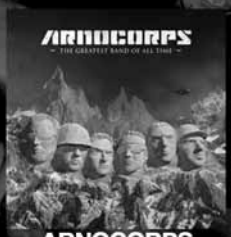

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AKA THE U.F.O. WIPE

HE DIDN'T GET HER NUMBER.

KN 17

Rachel Framingheddu's Photo Page
Piano in the Rain, Henry Miller Memorial Library, Big Sur

MY EIGHTY-SECOND COLUMN FOR RAZORCAKE BY BEN SNAKEPIT

AFTER MY BELOVED BEEBER DIED SIX MONTHS AGO, I WASN'T SURE WHEN I WOULD BE READY FOR A NEW DOG.
SNIFF
R.I.P. 2007 2016
THEN I MET...
FRANKIE!
...AND I KNEW I WAS READY.
I GOT HIM WHEN HE WAS ONLY SEVEN WEEKS OLD.
HE FITS IN THE PALM OF MY HAND!
HIS MOM WAS A BOSTON TERRIER.
HIS DAD WAS A PUG.
WHEN I MET THE LITTER THIS BOY CAME RIGHT UP TO ME.
HI THERE! HA HA HA.
I TOOK HIM HOME AND NAMED HIM FRANKIE TEARDROP, AFTER THE SONG BY SUICIDE.
FRANKIE CAN'T MAKE ENOUGH MONEY
FRANKIE CAN'T BUY ENOUGH FOOD
TRAINING A PUPPY IS A LOT OF WORK!
THIS SHOULD GET US THROUGH THE WEEK.
SUPER JUMBO 32 ROLL PAPER TOWELS
I HAD TO CHANGE THE SCHEDULE AT MY JOB SO I COULD COME HOME ON MY LUNCH BREAK.
HE POOPS AND PEES EVERYWHERE. HE'S LIKE A LITTLE G.G. ALLIN.
RAWR
LIFE SUCKS
BUT IT FEELS SO AWESOME TO HAVE A LITTLE FRIEND AGAIN.
DOGS ARE AWESOME AND GOOD FOR THE SOUL.
(THIS IS THE REAL FRANKIE)

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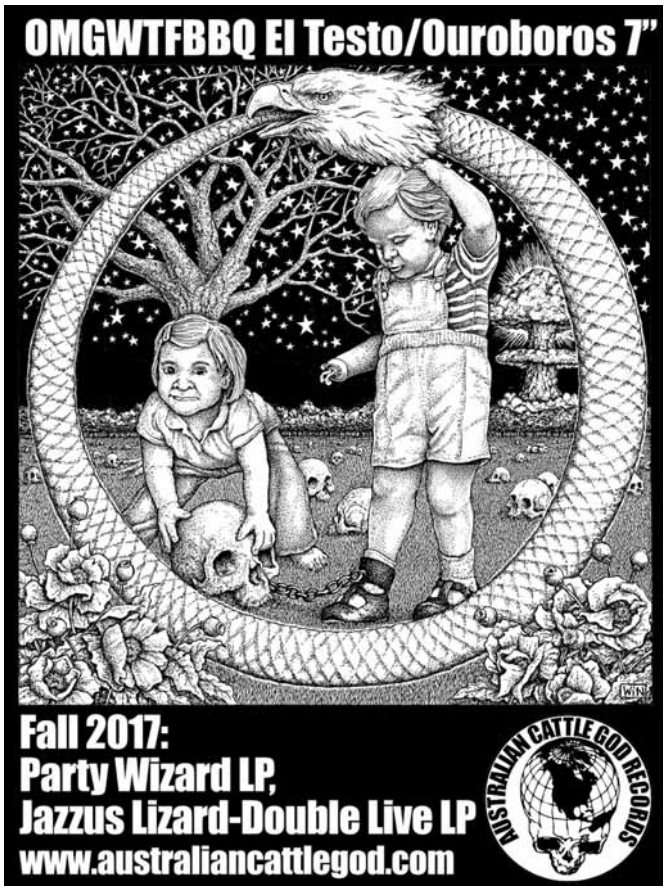
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A cat laying on your neck.
This seems like it'd be uncomfortable, but it's not!
A sloppy vegetarian reuben sandwich.
plop
Seeing a frog.
is she STILL there?
Wearing a t-shirt and shorts in the sun after a long, cold Maine winter.
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VS
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When the pull string comes out of your hoodie in the wash.
Gritty greens in your salad.
EECH!
Realizing you're out of coffee first thing in the morning.
THERE IS NO GOD!
Any news having to do with the Trump administration.
Wake me when it's over.
Cat puke on the bed.
It wasn't me.
Too many unanswered emails.
Wake me when my inbox is empty.
When whoever used the last of the T.P. didn't replace the roll.*
WTF!
*Bonus points if there are no more rolls.
That creeping realization that there are many people you've loved in your lifetime that you'll probably never see again because time passes much too quickly now that you're closer to 40 than 30 and everyone has other priorities.

Polka dots are NOT PUNK.

A LONER, DOTTY...A REBEL

So my band—Rev. Nørb & the Onions—wasn't my idea to call it that—would've preferred "Pat McCurdy & the Men About Town" myself—have just finished up our set at Milwaukee's cavernous Circle A club (capacity thirty), leaving us just enough time to bolt across town and catch erstwhile Dead Boys guitarist Cheetah Chrome ("erstwhile" means "former") (unless I am confusing it with "covfefe") and his cast of merry rogues playing their fortieth anniversary tribute to the Dead Boys' heralded *Young, Loud & Snotty* album. As advertised, they launch into an uninterrupted, virtual note-for-note recreation of *YL&S*'s first side, breaking up sides one and two with some new thing Cheetah sings, delivering side two in its entirety, and closing with "Son of Sam," their only nod to the Dead Boys' more-or-less-unfairly-maligned second album, *We Have Come for Your Children*—no "Third Generation Nation," no "(I Don't Wanna Be No) Catholic Boy," no "Flame Thrower Love." Oh well, I guess we're all gettin' kinda old, maybe a twelve-song set is maybe all we can handle at this point. Despite the glaring lack of *WHCFYC* action, I quite enjoyed the set—yes, they were fronted by some guy who had the audacity to not be Stiv Bators—and the unmitigated gall to continue not being Stiv Bators for the duration of the performance—but that can't exactly be helped. They did have o.g.d.b. Johnny Blitz on drums, as well as a rhythm guitarist who looked like a dead ringer for legendary Green Bay soundman Dorito Dan (FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: Turns out this guy rode the same school bus as Brad and Rick Sims of the Didjits), but I find myself oddly captivated by the bass player. At first, I find myself checking him out in an attempt to discern whether or not it's o.g.d.b. Jeff Magnum on bass (it wasn't), and, if so (it wasn't) (pay attention), rectifying the current guy's Billy Burks 'do with Magnum's grotesque 1970s hair beret, but, once I have hashed out the is-he-or-is-he-not-Jeff-Magnum question to my satisfaction (GOD DAMMIT HUCK, I DONE TOLD YOU IT WAS NOT HIM!!!), I find myself curiously captivated by—of all things—the guy's TIE. Yes, that's right—the first Dead Boys album is playing out, live and at full volume, before me, and meanwhile I am staring at some dude's fucking neckwear, lost in thought. The guy—who turned out to be Ricky Rat of the Trash Brats, a band about whom I admit I have not thunk in several centuries, though he must be important because he was selling his own t-shirts—was festooned in a black cravat bedecked with white polka dots, and the more I scrutinized it, the more I became convinced that, *fuck, that tie is exactly right.* I mean, in terms of the band's sartorial choices for the evening, Not-Stiv was wearing a tight v-neck shirt with red and white horizontal stripes, which I guess was kinda maybe right-*ish*, but he wasn't scrawny and didn't look like a weasel, so he was certainly not exactly right. Johnny Blitz was wearing a baseball cap and didn't really look like Ric Flair, so that wasn't exactly right, and Cheetah Chrome is bald and looks kinda like Baron Von Raschke, so that's not exactly right, either. Worse yet, Dorito Dan was wearing a sleeveless denim vest with a big Motörhead patch on the back when everyone and their sister knows Dorito Dan is supposed to wear a ratty old Doritos® sweatshirt day in and day out; clearly the gentleman's school bus was one of substandard length. Yet, in this swirling mass of not-exactly-rightness, the bass player's tie stands out like a polka-dotted beacon, Light in the Darkness of Insanity. It's so right. It's *fucking* right. *Never has neckwear been righter!* And, naturally, this stunning effusion of rightness cannot help but to beg the question: WHY? *Why is this tie such a stunning bastion of sartorial rectitude? Why is this spotted cravat the right tie for the job? What makes a man start fires? What makes a man wear a polka dot tie? Does a man who starts fires wear a polka dot tie while starting said fires? Aren't ties flammable? Or do the polka dots act as a sprinkler system of sorts? And what about... Naomi?* I muse upon this weighty matter for a while, as not-Stiv and the boys careen thru SR 6038—fully loud, fully snotty, hold the youth. Sometime around their cover of the Syndicate Of Sound's "Hey Little Girl"(or is it their cover of the Dead Boys covering the Syndicate Of Sound's "Hey Little Girl?" Either way, Cheetah hates it, yet still performs it, for purposes of historical complete-itude, which is either admirable or appalling) (probably both), I receive my patented Eureka Moment: The bass player's black-with-white-polka-dots tie looks right because Stiv was wearing a black-with-white-polka-dots *shirt* on the cover of *The Lord and the New Creatures* album, a mid-'80s release on a French label that was essentially the nine-song *Disconnected* album plus the five non-LP songs on the three Stiv solo 45s; clearly, I associate black-with-white-polka-dots with Stiv Bators, and Stiv with the Dead Boys, hence the Great Correctness of the gentleman's neckwear. Yet, as the show booms on, I can't help thinking that there's something more to it than that, that polka dots are part of some whole *look*—some arcane counter-cultural signifier—on which I cannot quite put my finger. I begin to re-process the data using polka dots as a sort of global rock'n'roll variable: *Who wears polka dots?* Stunningly, not me. Despite all the kooky garb I've worn over the course of thirty-six years of playing out with punk bands (not to mention just walking around town like a optically jarring weirdo), practically *none* of it has been polka-dotted. I do have a pair of white sunglasses with black polka dots that I'm sure I must have worn at some point in time, I have what appears to be a hospital top (for a very jolly nurse) with huge red and yellow and pink and blue dots on it, but I'm told irregularly-sized circular shapes indicate a "spot" pattern, not polka dots—I do have a photo of me onstage in a Edgar Winter wig and Everlast® boxing shorts wearing a black halter top with big pink polka dots, so I guess that counts—and once, devoid of any better ideas for stage garb (I guess my halter tops and Edgar Winter wigs were in the wash), I bought a big package of multicolored dot stickers and adhered them all over my body, proclaiming myself "the Mysterious Mr. Dot"—but, apart from those isolated instances, I really don't have any polka dot gear. I do have an aqua button-up shirt with orange and chartreuse dots on it, but the dots have borders on them, and do polka dots have borders? Like, if you draw two black circles around a green dot, is it still a polka dot, or is it now a different kind of dot (a mazurka dot?), or something else entirely? Do borders kill the polka? *Fuck you, polka knows no borders!* I really couldn't see wearing a black shirt with white polka dots. I'd look like a fucking twat, like someone who hangs around at parties when the hosts are just trying to go to bed, trying to impress them with stories about how they bought a coverless copy of *Fantastic Four Annual* #4 for a quarter at St. Marks Comics in 1986 or something. So, if I don't wear polka dots, who does? Well, Johnny Thunders

ALEX BARRETT

The first Dead Boys album is playing out, live and at full volume, before me, and meanwhile I am staring at some dude's fucking neckwear, lost in thought.

wore polka dots, right? Sure enough, I looked it up: Thunders, too, had a black shirt with white polka dots. Fellow Heartbreaker Walter Lure had a few polka dot shirts as well. Backing up one band, David Johansen sports a black-with-white-polka-dot blouse in one well-known New York Dolls publicity photo, and drummer Jerry Nolan, who was in the Dolls AND the Heartbreakers, wears a similar blouse in another (or, heck, maybe it's the same blouse and they just borrow each other's clothes. If so, I gotta halter top you can use for the big dance on Saturday night). Richard Hell wears a white-with-black-polka-dot shirt in a number of photos, Debby Harry wore polka dots from time to time, and Bryan Gregory of the Cramps had not only a black Flying V with white polka dots, but a white Flying V with black polka dots as well, clearly rendering inert that flimsy "Ebony and Ivory" jive-to-come in advance. So, are polka dots some kinda New York drug-doer thing, then? Visual relics of a bygone era when people wore aviator sunglasses, knew people with mustaches, and had to pretend to like the Talking Heads (for the record, I can find no photos of David Byrne wearing polka dots—nor of Lou Reed nor Lenny Kaye, for that matter)? Not quite. Inspecting further, Elvis wore a black-with-white-polka-dot shirt on the picture sleeve of "You're a Heartbreaker" (presumably about neither Thunders, Lure, nor Nolan), his third 45 on Sun Records, whilst Bob Dylan wore a green-with-white-polka-dot shirt on the PS of "Just Like Tom Thumb's Blues," recorded the day I was born. On the West Coast, the Dickies and the Quick wore polka dots; in England, polka dot enthusiasts included Paul Weller, Elvis Costello, and Captain Sensible. Joe Jackson—who Cheetah Chrome kinda used to look like before he looked like Baron Von Raschke—sports a black-with-white-polka-dot tie on the back of his first album, just like the bass player in Cheetah's band, which will bring us back to d'oh: *Who wears polka dots? Who claims them as their own? To what tribe are polka dots a visual signifier of membership?* Writ simply, *are polka dots punk?* Do we claim polka dots as our own the same way we claimed stripes from Ernie and Bert? The same way we owned checkers before our beautiful checkeriness was cruelly filched by the ska dorks? The same way we staked out leopard spot before the mullets and the hoochie mamas? Returning to Google Images to sort out this thorny geometrical quandary once and for all, I stifle my natural gag reflex, and punch in "donald trump polka dot tie." Alas, the lymph freezes in my veins when I find that Brainless Leader's line of fine neckwear does include—*gasp!*—Donald J. Trump Signature Collection polka dot ties (though, to be fair, not particularly cool ones). Polka dots are NOT PUNK. *Thank you for playing!* For the *Young, Loud & Snotty* 45th anniversary tour, Doritos sweatshirts for everybody!

Love
–Nørb

Schwinn Sting-ray-shredding, shithead kid.

L.A. 1977

When I stop and think about it, it's a bit weird to think that 1977 was forty years ago. As a shave-headed, Schwinn Stingray-shredding shithead kid, I was still in the first grade, ready to start my second grade stretch later that year in the fall. Exploits of that shenanigan-filled second grade year were reflected upon in great detail back in issue #76, the same exploits that some of you readers might remember (sorry, Ma, the statute of limitations apply). The type of music I remember happening around then was your standard '70s fare—hard rock, heavy metal, easy listening pap that occasionally flirted over the fence with some country artists, and the onslaught of the disco era. Most radio stations stuck within the realm of their assigned playlists, digging their feet in to hold on to their market share.

Unbeknownst to a lot of radio stations around this time was a riptide of music revolution happening below the surface of scummy muck atop the ocean of rock. That unexplained, thrashing current was punk rock, and it was traveling to and fro worldwide. Starting from the year before, a good handful of punk bands signed with a few major labels, the few that were willing to give these bands a chance.

The people running these labels were trying with no avail to get these bands' records airplay on the radio. Anyone who's paid any bit of attention to the history of how a label interacts with radio programmers nationwide knows how much of an advertising- and straight-up circle jerk it is. Unless the artist being pushed was a sure thing, you'd be lucky if most stations would wipe their ass with the album you're trying to sell them on. Forget all about music radio stations today—that's a whole other nightmare in advertising—unless you subscribe to a satellite radio service.

Fortunately enough, there was a station here in Los Angeles that featured a Sunday night radio show that embraced this new direction of rock and roll: KROQ's Rodney Bingenheimer, AKA "Rodney on the Roq." Starting in August of 1976, Rodney's first show played some music from a band that no one in L.A. was even hip to: the Ramones. From that point on, the band stopped into the studio any time possible while they were on tour through Los Angeles. Rodney opened the floodgates with bands that were signed and unsigned alike, and soon after his show was a solid stretch of punk rock music (until some years later, mixing it up with artists old and new). Bingenheimer's show was proof that punk rock was alive and well, other stations be damned. (Speaking of Rodney, his last show aired this past June (KROQ finally dropped the budget axe), and hopefully he'll finally get a proper show on Sirius/XM radio on The Underground Garage channel where he belongs.)

The summer of 1977 cast a weird shadow across the nation. There was the major NYC blackout on July 13-14 that resulted in over 300 million dollars in damages due to looting and rioting, with close to 4,000 arrests. Keep in mind that's three mil back in 1977, and it all went down within twenty-five hours. Adding to this shitstorm was the anxious uncertainty of serial killer David Berkowitz, AKA Son of Sam, lurking about under the cloak of the high-temperature NYC darkness. He was caught the following month on August 10, and black Labradors are never looked at the same way again. (Berkowitz claimed a neighbor's dog was possessed by a demon that commanded Berkowitz to kill.)

Back here in L.A., the first punk club opened its basement doors on August 18 in Hollywood, just a couple days after Elvis Presley passed on. That club was called the Masque. Rented out by Brendan Mullen, the huge basement labyrinth of space was the central nervous system of L.A. and surrounding area punk artists until it was officially shut down by the city in January 1978, moving to another location less than a year later.

A grip of L.A.'s first wave of punkers not only performed at the original Masque, but rented out a few of the rooms there for practicing as well. Over the last forty years, very limited filmed footage has surfaced from the less than six months it was going on, and that's a damn shame, especially with how many bands played there. One of the first bands to play and rent out a room at the Masque were The Controllers, a band I had the pleasure of playing drums with occasionally when they reunited back in the late '90s/early 2000s for a spell (and at the thirty-year Masque reunion show in 2007 with a big chunk of other Masque house bands).

The end of May 1977 brought the introduction of my homie Darth Vader and the rest of the characters in *Star Wars*, as well as a heavy-duty fascination with *Planet of the Apes*. Funny thing is, one of the biggest opening premieres for *Star Wars* was at Grauman's Chinese Theater, just a half a mile down Hollywood Boulevard from where the Masque was born a few months later. That street looked like an incredible zoo back then, and one can't help but think what the crowds of tourists walking around there were thinking when they got an eyeful of Masque regulars walking/stumbling to and fro. Even later on, when there was still a good number of Hollywood joints to play, you'd catch the occasional out-of-towner tripping out on the punker contingent, even stopping you to ask the name of your band, which was always funny if your band happened to have a raunchy name.

Another summer happening of 1977 was the birth of one of the longest-running U.S. punk fanzines, *Flipside*. It was started in nearby uptown Whittier by a handful of music fans who were getting turned on to bands—a lot of whom were regular performers at the Masque. *Flipside* ended up becoming a fave read amongst the clusters of punkers nationwide, even spilling over and gaining some readership across the pond. Rodney on the Roq had a Top 20 list for years in the zine, and later on down the line, I was even brought into the fold by our own Todd Taylor who was co-editing there at the time. He encouraged me to get my writing on and that continues on to the very sentence you're reading now.

While I was obviously too young to be pogoing neck deep in the exploding 1977 hubbub of Los Angeles punk rock at that precise moment in time when I was seven, it's a bit of a trip *now* to realize just what the hell was going on at that time. KISS was the extent of my early childhood rocking, with the heavier bands waiting for me just around the corner to beautifully beat my brains in. I remember being a bummed kid because I couldn't go see my heroes in face paint at the L.A. Forum in August 1977, especially when I found out from the older kids that KISS was planning on recording during the three sold-out nights for their upcoming live album, which ended up being *KISS Alive II*. I often wondered if my parents bought that record for me for Christmas '77 because they knew I really wanted to go, or simply because I wouldn't shut up about the band. Either way, I was excited to look at and listen to it for the first time, imagining I coulda been one of the screaming mouths in the crowd at the Forum.

Earlier that year in March, just a few miles down the road from where I grew

MARCOS SIREF

I was obviously too young to be pogoing neck deep in the exploding 1977 hubbub of Los Angeles punk rock at that precise moment in time when I was seven.

up, the Ramones played a $5 show at the Golden West Ballroom that also featured two supports acts: The Dogs (Detroit's own!) and an up-and-coming outfit out of Pasadena called Van Halen, who'd be signed and releasing their debut LP less than a year later. Kidd Spike (Controllers/ Gears) and Billy Zoom (X) were both in attendance at this show, amongst others. It must be noted here that there was another band not too far down the road from the Golden West Ballroom, located in Downey, that was born just a few years later in 1979 and would go on to forge a style to be known to punkers and rock and roll enthusiasts alike as "American Music." That band was The Blasters (no, not The Carpenters, although they were also outta Downey—but they had already established themselves more than ten years prior—and that's an entirely different column).

What I'm recalling here are merely snippets of a kid growing up in L.A. County, but to those who were old enough (or not-so-old-enough, but did it anyway), to be a part of what was happening culturally during the underground movement here in my city, thank you. I know a number of the people I'd like to thank are no longer with us or are MIA, but that doesn't mean they haven't quit looking over us in spirit.

–Designated Dale
designateddale@yahoo.com

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CHICO SIMIO #61

"OUT OF THE DARKNESS, STEPS FORTH...A CHIMP!

·ART·

I WAS TERRIFIED...PARALYZED BY FEAR...NOT KNOWING WHAT CAME NEXT.

BUT THEN A REVELATION...

I REALIZED I KNEW WHAT HAD TO BE DONE! I'D KNOWN ALL ALONG!

I WALKED INTO THE LIGHT OF SELF-CONFIDENCE AND BEGAN TO FORMULATE A PLAN, SO THAT WHEN MY JOB SHUTS DOWN, I CAN BECOME A FULL-TIME ARTIST AND ACTUALLY NOT STARVE!

I'M GLAD TO HAVE FINALLY MADE A DECISION ABOUT MY FUTURE AND WILL BE REALLY GLAD TO SAY...

GOODBYE FOREVER, TIME CLOCK!

What it was like To be young Sad Queer And alone

Queer elder on summer solstice weekend

Today
I drank an old
Dos XX at 4PM
Proofed a story
About art as pain
And scrambled
To assemble a fan
In the midst
Of
Too much heat
Each drill bit hack
Making me feel one step closer
To something
I threw a drenched paper towel
Over sparkling water
And let the freeze
Drip
Into my eyes
As I listened to
CSS
And remembered
What it was like
To be young
Sad
Queer
And alone
Sweat dripping
Under cheap denim
And onto old dirty shoes
Summer breaking down the door
On the heels of smoke and winter
I read
suggestions on
my solstice intentions
And start listening to
New Order
For the first time in my life
Fantasized about Ray Bans
Stability
And how I'll ever
Get out of
This mess
How we'll
Ever
Get
By
Because if Sagittarius is rising
If Sagittarius is sacred
If Sagittarius is full
When will it explode

–Candace Hansen
(ig: @candohando)

The Presidential Puta

Homegrrl huntin'
Con sus nails filados
Ojos piercing
Cat-wing cuchillo
Steel-toe botas
Bundled yerbas,
Brujita magic.
Mal de ojo
En la palma de su mano,
Rosary beads
Wrapped around her fingers
Como el serpiente de Edén,
She's Eve's late nite ass.

My Presidential Puta, presente.
Presente pa' su gente.
Patrona de mi corazón,
Muxer primer.

My Presidential Puta
Ain't poppin caps.
Pistolas ain't shit
Disintegrating in the flames
Of this putita's rage.

My Presidential Puta,
Nopalera,
Con corazón espinada,
Held in her hands,
One bite welcomes immortality,
One bit n oh shit,
World hunger healed.

My Presidential Puta,
Provocative like my thoughts,
Social justice siempre en mi mente.

Self-labeled puta,
Patrona, jefa, cabrona.
Ladyboss, hustler.
Huevona, xillona pero siempre xingona
The presidential puta
concocting cuentos, hechizos
para un pueblo unido,
Rasquache beauty, sustainability hoe.

Where's my presidential puta?
La Puta that my dad said I'd become,
La Puta I wish I became,
La Puta I aspire to be.

Estefi

De repente I existed,
Just like Jesu Cristo.
They shoulda named me Jesus,
Por la divina que soy,
Pero instead
Stephanie.
Stephanie,
After the pirouetting white girl
From Full House.

Stephanie H.
At church with las monjas
Enraged by the Sex Pistol tiddies
seeping through my white robe.

Estephany
for my mima, mama, y papa.
Estefany
Like E-S-T-E-F-A-N-Y
The name on
Christmas cards n Junio jarritos
from mi abuela,

Tefi,
Pa las primas y tías
Exchanging carcajadas en Zacatecas,
En el rancho picking tunas,
beside nopales
posing with prickly limbs outstretched.

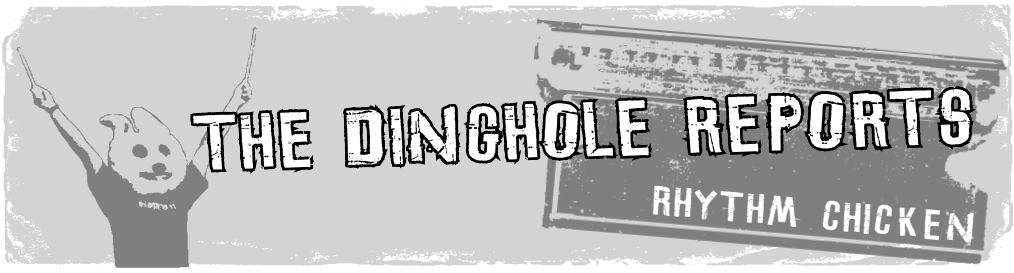
Estefi,
When my mama's feet swell
Or her back pains pulsate,
Estefi for a massage con Cofal.

Could've been Paloma
Like papi wanted,
Not after blonde hair and blue eyes.
Paloma,
After the pigeons outside of Costco
bobbing heads
to shopping carts' rhythmic roll.
I never feel Stephanie.
Instead
Esteph.
Esteph,
With an (eh) to begin,
The sound of indifference,
Siempre indifferente.

Estefi

–Steph M. Hernandez
Aka Xingona Patrona
(ig: @xingonapatrona)

ROQUE TORRES (ig: @lil|oepeep)



It was like riding a bike made of cotton candy and firecrackers!

Rattle-Thing

The month of March is a very great month for me. You see, I close up my business in March every year, the month where the numbers are so low that it is not worth staying open. If I were to stay open, I would only lose money. The way I see it, I would rather lose money being on vacation instead of sitting here trying to run my shop in Wisconsin and losing money while staring at an empty parking lot. Not many Americans get a month off of work every year, but mine is kind of forced. My month off is not a paid vacation by any means, but it's a month where I don't have to stay here, and I can sleep in if I want. If I were European, I would say March is my holiday.

This year, my March started off pretty darn great. My Hen, Kasia, and I flew out to California to touch base with the fine folks holding this very magazine together. First we drove through a blizzard for about five hours down to Milwaukee to fly away from the frozen tundra towards L.A. We landed at the Bob Hope Airport in Burbank and stepped off the plane into the seventy-degree sunny morning. It was pretty much surreal to be standing at the *outside* luggage claim corral peeling off our winter coats. I usually don't prefer the "tropical" vacation that many Midwesterners take, but this particular destination was fine with me.

Todd, the editor-in-chief, picked us up and quickly whisked us to the Griffith Observatory where we started hiking up some hills. The sky was blue and the sun was hot. My Hen and I were soaking up the hot sun and outstanding scenery, looking down on L.A. below and the Hollywood letters on the next set of hills nearby. We were quite overwhelmed with the general unbelievability of our surroundings when we happened upon a four-foot long rattlesnake crossing our path. I jumped back as I noticed the tail rattle-thing. How odd that my first-ever live rattlesnake sighting should be in the middle of America's largest city.

I was busy taking photos of this natural beauty while Todd was already warning the hikers coming the other way about the rattler ahead in their path. They were wearing headphones and paid no attention to his warning. As they passed us and neared the poisonous reptile we looked back and hoped they would see the danger ahead of them. They didn't. The snake slowly slithered his way toward them, but just missed them by inches. We just kind of looked back and cheered on our victor of choice, "SNAKE! SNAKE! SNAKE!" The first hour in California was pretty darn alright.

The rest of our Los Angeles stay was enjoyable to the fullest. While searching for Paul Newman's star on the Walk of Fame, we happened upon the star of Kermit the Frog. We ate numerous meals at an amazing restaurant called My Taco, the culinary pinnacle of Highland Park! We strolled through the new Broad Museum of modern art. We marveled at the beauty of the Watts Towers. We rubbed elbows with many fine Razorcakers who came to partake in my rare California Rhythm Chili. We recorded a podcast quite hungover while slurping champagne, and then went on to watch David Lynch's *Eraserhead* for the first time. There was no Chicken-related ruckus this time around, but fun was definitely had nonetheless!

As quick as our L.A. visit was, our Las Vegas visit was even shorter. We caught a twenty-dollar budget bus from Union Station, which took us to the desert den of sin. We rented a car which brought us to the finest points of the Vegas area: Red Rock Canyon, Hoover Dam, Lake Mead, Boulder City, Fremont Street, and one quick visit to Las Vegas Boulevard. The new bypass bridge high above Hoover Dam was a new one for me, and made me aware that maybe I actually am afraid of heights. For eights days we wore shorts and T-shirts in L.A. and Vegas, then we boarded the plane home.

Landing back in Milwaukee was like a slap to the face. At fifteen degrees, it felt considerably colder than when we left. It was about 11 PM on a weeknight and we were hungry. After finding my car we quick zoomed over to the Vanguard, Milwaukee's new southside sausage bar, that serves sausages 'til midnight, *thank god*. We loaded up on fancy sausage-based yumminess with PBRs before retiring for the night.

The next morning was a big one. Our Las Vegas trip was cut short because we had to get back to Milwaukee earlier than planned for a special reason. My Hen was all set to be naturalized. Being a Polish national and a legal resident here in the U.S., she made the final step and became a U.S. citizen. I had never been to a group naturalization ceremony such as this. There were over ninety new citizens getting sworn in at once. It was all very educational, enlightening, and vastly interesting to an American-born dork like myself. As soon as it was done, there were *many* volunteers from the League of Women Voters outside getting the new citizens registered to vote. Here and there I keep seeing signs of hope in our current political quagmire. On this day, my Polish Hen enlightened me a little bit about being an American.

We soon found ourselves back up in northern Wisconsin. I was sleeping in most days, going to the Y, and putting multiple layers of polyurethane down on my soup shop floor. The rest of the month seemed pretty boring. I was already dreading the next month, going back to work, back to another eleven months of not having the month off. Then I got an email from Jake of *Roctober* in Chicago. He wanted the Rhythm Chicken to drive down to the big city and drum for Ratso And The Rabbits. Some of you might remember about five years ago when Jake created the most amazing project band in the history of puppet-fronted rock'n'roll, Ratso And The Rabbits! Ratso, the puppet host for the Chicago-based cable access TV show *Chicagogo,* was the singer frontpuppet for the Rabbits, a group of rag-tag rock and roll rabbits (well, except for the chicken on drums. This faux-*paw* still confuses me). We played one show at Chicago's Bottom Lounge back in 2012 and then the project was put on semi-permanent hold. Apparently, the rock'n'roll rabbit draft is back in session and our superpowers were once again called upon to bring lunacy to the big cit yet again! My month of vacation would not end on a limp, dry note!

Dinghole Report #157: The Return of Ratso And The Rabbits! (Rhythm Chicken sighting #702)

So, it was about five years ago when this band first joined the forces of thee Goblins, Nobunny, Chicagogo, and the Rhythm Chicken. We all agreed on eight cover songs and played a chaotic set to a manic crowd of puppet-rock enthusiasts.

Now, five years later, our services are called-upon yet again, only this time to help the infamous Empty Bottle celebrate their 25th anniversary. We cut down the set by a couple songs and added a new special song to mark the event. I was (and still am) recovering from my back surgery, but sometimes the duty of rock'n'roll outweighs the screws and rods in my spine, especially for a gig of such high caliber! This particular Saturday my Hen had an early morning nursing shift obligation, but

JIM NEWBERRY

Jake created the most amazing project band in the history of puppet-fronted rock'n'roll, Ratso And The Rabbits!

then we swiftly zoomed down to the biggest city in Illinois and readied ourselves for rock'n'roll greatness.

During our pre-show sound check (which was also our only *practice*) I drummed for the first time in about eighteen months. It was like riding a bike, a bike made of cotton candy and firecrackers! A few hours later the club was full to the rafters and all eyes were on the stage as we assumed our instruments. I was wearing my new favorite Rhythm Chicken outfit, my Chester Marcol jersey, number thirteen in green and gold. I looked out into the crowd and saw my Hen next to Leroy, my neighbor in Ephraim who came down for the gig. I took a swig of Old Style and we broke into song!

I really don't remember much of our set. I know we played covers by the Revillos, Goblins, the Mummies, and a few others. Then our shining opus. We covered thee Goblins yet again—who as I understand, did a cover of Wayne County's song "Max's Kansas City"—only we redid the number as "Bruce's Empty Bottle." It was an homage to the amazing rock venue which has brought twenty-five years of amazing underground rock to the Windy City. I really don't remember much about our version of that song either, but I think it was well-received. I threw my drums aside and attacked the stack of Old Styles in the dressing room.

Nobunny was up next! I've seen Nobunny quite a few times before this, but *goldang* if this wasn't the most on-the-nuts show I've seen them do. It was 2008 when I fist met Mr. Nobunny in Las Vegas and witnessed him crawl half-naked across the Double Down Saloon's filthy floor to the stage and rock out to maybe fifteen people. This was a jam-packed Empty Bottle, about four hundred people, and Nobunny *completely rocked the house down*. They were totally *on top and in charge!* To put it mildly, they were perfect.

Up next was the headlining act for the night, an act I've heard of for years and was finally able to witness live, Quintron And Miss Pussycat. I was plenty full of Old Styles, had just played a rock show, and my back was doing well. I was feeling *all right*. Quintron completely took me by surprise. It was one man playing a Hammond organ with a weird, light-activated spinning coffee can with holes in it that was pretty much like a percussive theremin. Then he had Miss Pussycat in an orange dress with two maracas singing backups and demanding audio respect. I don't know how else to explain it, and maybe I was a little too Old Styled up, but it was the most perfect musical way to end my month off.

My back is slowly getting better, I can start drumming again, and then I got an email from Milwaukee's Howl Street Recordings to shoot a video of the Rhythm Chicken for their drummer video series. I'm gonna need more Old Style, or Blatz, or Hamms.

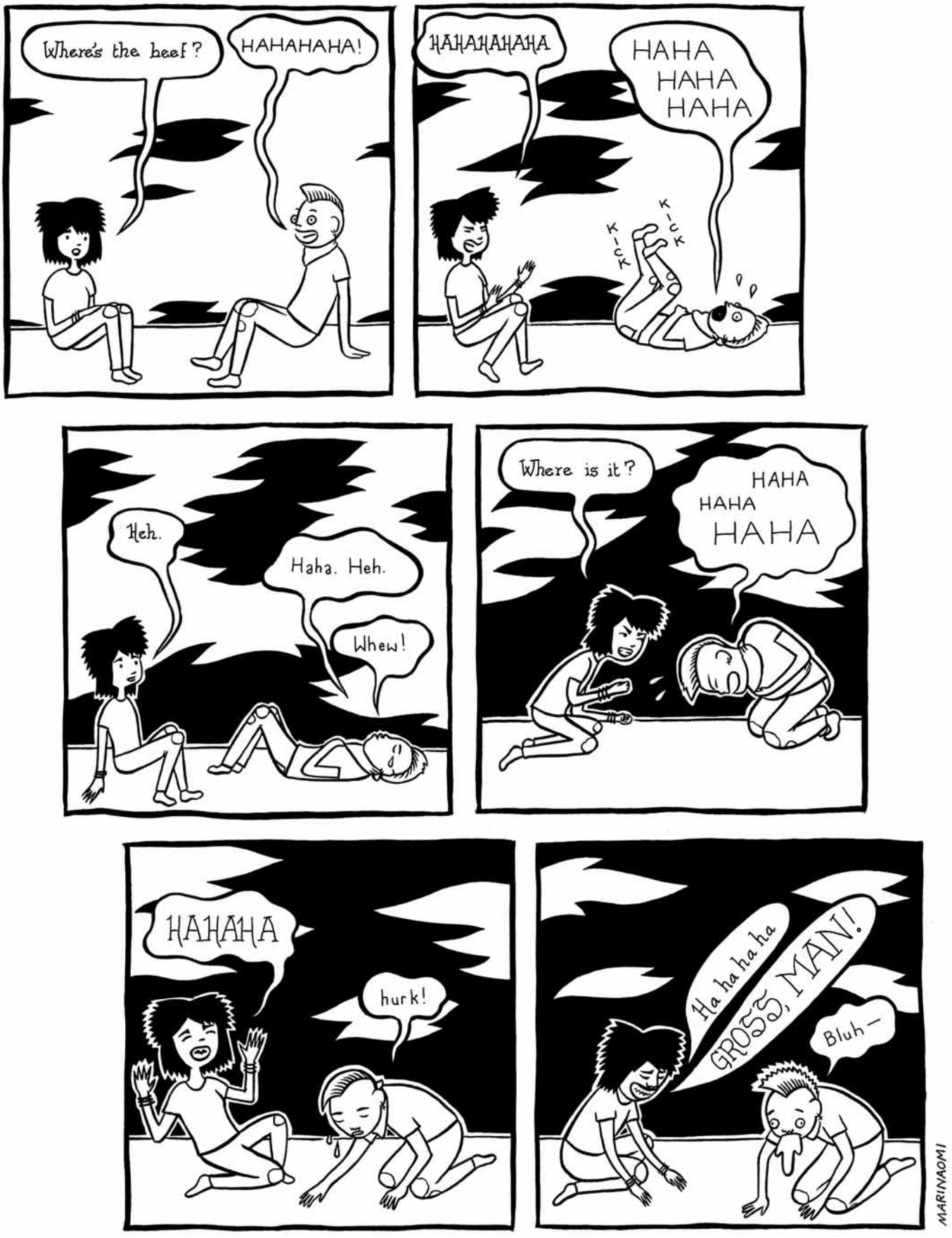
Now I'm back to work at the soup shop. I'm fixing up my drums, and for the first time in a while, I'm booking parades again. Yeah, March was a pretty good month.

SNAKE! SNAKE! SNAKE! SNAKE!!!!!!!

–Rhythm Chicken

ASIAN GOTH PUNKS RULE the WORLD!

BY MARINAOMI


Where's the beef?
HAHAHAHA!
HAHAHAHAHA
HAHA
HAHA
HAHA
KICK
KICK
Heh.
Haha. Heh.
Whew!
Where is it?
HAHA
HAHA
HAHA
HAHAHA
hurk!
Ha ha ha ha
GROSS, MAN!
Bluh—
MARINAOMI

Some people deserve to be upset.

Drama-Free Youth

You may not have heard the term "self-regulation." It's most often used in pedagogical and psychological research and documentation, which may not be your particular cup of tea. But even if the term is unfamiliar, you may have heard about the famous "Marshmallow Test," a psychology experiment where children were given one marshmallow and told that they could eat that marshmallow immediately or wait an undetermined period of time without eating it, at which point they would be given a second marshmallow. Or maybe you remember, as a child, singing along with Mr. Rogers as he sang about what to do "with the mad that you feel." Or, if you currently have young kids, you may have seen a Sesame Street music video featuring a shockingly enlightened Cookie Monster singing about how when he sees a cookie, "me want it, but me wait."

The Marshmallow Test, Fred Roger's tune, and Cookie Monster's later work all lead back to the concept of self-regulation. In simple terms, self-regulation is the ability to focus and be calm and alert. It involves self control, but it's more than that. Self control can be achieved through the threat of punishment or consequences from outside sources, like teachers or parents or cops. Self-regulation requires internal motivation and the skills to cope with the challenges of life. It also hones critical thinking skills, because it gives a person the ability to assess the specifics of a situation and react accordingly, rather than just blindly following directions because they are afraid of the consequences that someone else will bring upon them.

I was at a local park this weekend with my friends Annie Marie and Michael and their two sons Sam and Charlie. Sam is a few months younger than my older son, and Charlie is a few months younger than my younger son, so when we get together it's a riot of young boys. Someone is always jumping on something, climbing something, demanding a banana, or getting covered in dirt. That's not stereotypical musing about what groups of boys are like. That's just what honestly happens.

There was an older kid at the park as well, probably around eight years old. He joined in the chasing games our sons were playing. At some point Sam decided to take his pants off and run through the park's splash pad, naked. This is not an uncommon occurrence in this group of kids. But the older boy decided to point and laugh. Seemingly unconcerned that he was obviously within earshot of me and Anne Marie he shrieked, "Ha! You look like you have a *vagina*! *You're a Woman*!"

Anne Marie didn't hear him; she was embroiled in a discussion with Sam about how he probably should put his pants back on. Luckily, I worked in child care for years and have no problem telling other people's children to cut it out.

"Hey!" I barked. He turned towards me, stunned. "Don't talk about people's bodies that way. That's mean and cruel. Don't do it."

It wasn't my most inspiring speech, but it did the trick. The kid slunk away and Sam sped off, pants-less, towards the splash pad, where he was eventually apprehended and re-pantsed by his dad.

What bothered me the most was that my own four-year-old son, Milo, stood beside this kid and joined in the laughing. When I told the kid to quit it, Milo looked nervous and ran off towards a far corner of the park.

Later, at bedtime, I asked Milo, about the situation. "That big kid was saying some things about Sam that weren't true and he was laughing at him, Mama," Milo told me, "And I wanted to say that's not true but I didn't want to make the new boy upset."

This conversation introduced me to a glaring hole in how I've taught Milo to interact with others. We put a lot of stress on treating others with kindness and respect, but I have clearly been lax in clarifying that when you stand up to someone who is being a bully you're probably going to upset the bully, and *that's totally cool*. In teaching him not to upset people, I'd forgotten to mention that some people deserve to be upset. It's easy to get caught up in the chaos of a moment, especially when you're trying to be liked by an older kid. I was disappointed, but not surprised, that Milo wasn't able to pump the brakes and stand up for his friend.

Parenting an almost-five-year-old involves constantly introducing more and more complex concepts into their lives. It's impossible to teach them how to perfectly react to every situation that they encounter, so the only thing to do is teach them how to stay calm, focus, and think things through.

Back to Mr. Rogers for a second. I've been on a bit of a Mr. Rogers kick lately. I'm very grateful I was born into the perfect era to receive his gentle televised lessons about kindness and humanity as part of my allotted childhood TV time. At the end of that song about what to do with the mad that you feel, he sings "It's great to be able to stop/when you plan something that's wrong." Fred Rogers was ahead of his time. He presented complex ideas about right and wrong to children, all the while giving his tiny viewers an outpouring of love and confidence. He didn't pretend that kids should never want to do jerky stuff. He instead wanted children to learn to love themselves and trust themselves. He wanted them to use that trust and love to act well as they moved through the world. He was into self-regulation, even if he never called it that. Fred Rogers knew what was up.

One of my favorite kids' books is a seemingly innocuous storybook called *The Library Lion*. It's not a book that would attract your attention if you saw it on the shelf at a bookstore. I picked it up because Milo often talks about how he wants to be a librarian when he grows up, so I always grab library-themed books when I see them. The story is about a lion who mysteriously shows up at a library one day. One of the librarians, Mr. McBee, is peevish about the lion's presence and complains to the head librarian, Ms. Merriweather. Both of them are sticklers for the rules and when they conclude that the lion isn't actually breaking any rules by being in the library, he is allowed to stay. The lion makes himself useful. He dusts shelves, puts books away, and provides a furry backrest for children at storytime.

One day, Ms. Merriweather falls and hurts herself, and only the lion is able to alert the other librarians. He does this by roaring, which is against the library rules. The lion knows he's broken the rules and so he disappears from the library and doesn't come back the next day. Everyone is bummed. They all liked the lion and he made the library a better place. Eventually, even rule-following Mr. McBee misses the lion enough to go find him and tell him that they have a new rule: breaking the rules is okay, if you're doing it to help someone.

The lion comes back to the library and everyone is psyched. So, essentially, this is a kids' book, targeted at preschoolers, where the moral is "It's okay to break the rules if you have a solid reason and are doing it for the greater good." It doesn't shy away from that kind of complex understanding of human behavior. It presents readers with a situation where the rules didn't serve the people they were supposed to serve and shows them what happens when people

MITCH CLEM and NATION OF AMANDA

If we don't want to live fast and die young, we have to figure out how to create a community and a life for ourselves where we can thrive.

learn to think critically about situations on a case-by-case basis. Don't follow the rules, kids. Follow your hearts.

Besides reading books like this and taking lessons from Mr. Rogers and Cookie Monster, how do we teach self-regulation? I work in the field of Early Childhood Education and this is a question that no one has an easy or complete answer to. Adults want to increase their own abilities to self-regulate, as well as making sure kids develop these skills. One way I try to help both myself and my kids is by modeling self-regulation in my everyday actions. Simple techniques parents have been using forever, like narrating what we're doing or feeling, shouldn't be underestimated. If you tell your child you're feeling frustrated because you're hungry and your food is taking too long to cook, and then tell them that you're going to take a deep breath and think about something you like to distract yourself, you've just shown them a way to cope with impatience. It may seem inconsequential, and we may feel like dorks for describing our mundane feelings out loud, but it matters to our kids.

Self-regulation, when we realize how different it is from self control, is actually a perfect concept to weave into parenting from a punk perspective. For me, the core value of punk is critical thinking. I identify with punk because it gave a word to describe the attitude I've always had, something that can probably best be summed up by the phrase: "Says who?" The whole idea behind DIY culture is creating your own personal rules to live by, outside of convention. When people cultivate a career or a place to live or a music scene that doesn't follow standard rules, it requires them to focus on what outcomes they want and how best to reach those outcomes. You can't do that without self-regulation and critical thinking. Sure, there are always people who reject convention and attempt to just be wild, dangerous beings who aim not to live by *any* rules, but that can get old fast. If we don't want to live fast and die young, we have to figure out how to create a community and a life for ourselves where we can thrive.

I don't care if my kids grow up to be into punk music, but I do hope that they grow up with critical thinking skills. And critical thinking stems from intellectual confidence. And intellectual confidence stems from self-regulation. My own self-regulation needs work sometimes. I still spend too much time looking at Instagram when I know it would make me feel better to read a book. I still eat too many cookies before bed and wake up with a sugar hangover. I still sometimes choose to watch a crappy TV show when I know I'd be happier if I listened to records instead. But my kids have helped me work on being a more focused, calm, alert person. And I'm trying to do the same for them.

–Jennifer Whiteford

Chris Boarts Larson Photo Column - Tau Cross

Chris Boarts Larson, www.slugandlettuce.net | fb.me/slugandlettuce

Tau Cross at Strange Matter, Richmond Va., 4/8/16

Every so often a band comes along that just rocks my world upside down. The other day I was listening to the first Tau Cross album, which is a perfect record. I can fall into their music and feel it deeply, as though they speak to my soul. Composed of members of many of my longtime favorites—Amebix, Misery, Voivoid, and War/Plague—Tau Cross is the perfect combination of everything.

Last year they played in Richmond on a Friday night. Getting to see them was one of those all-time awesome life moments. They have a new album coming out this summer which I'm super stoked for. As of now there are no plans for any U.S. shows, so I can only dream of having such an opportunity again in the future.

–Chris Boarts Larson
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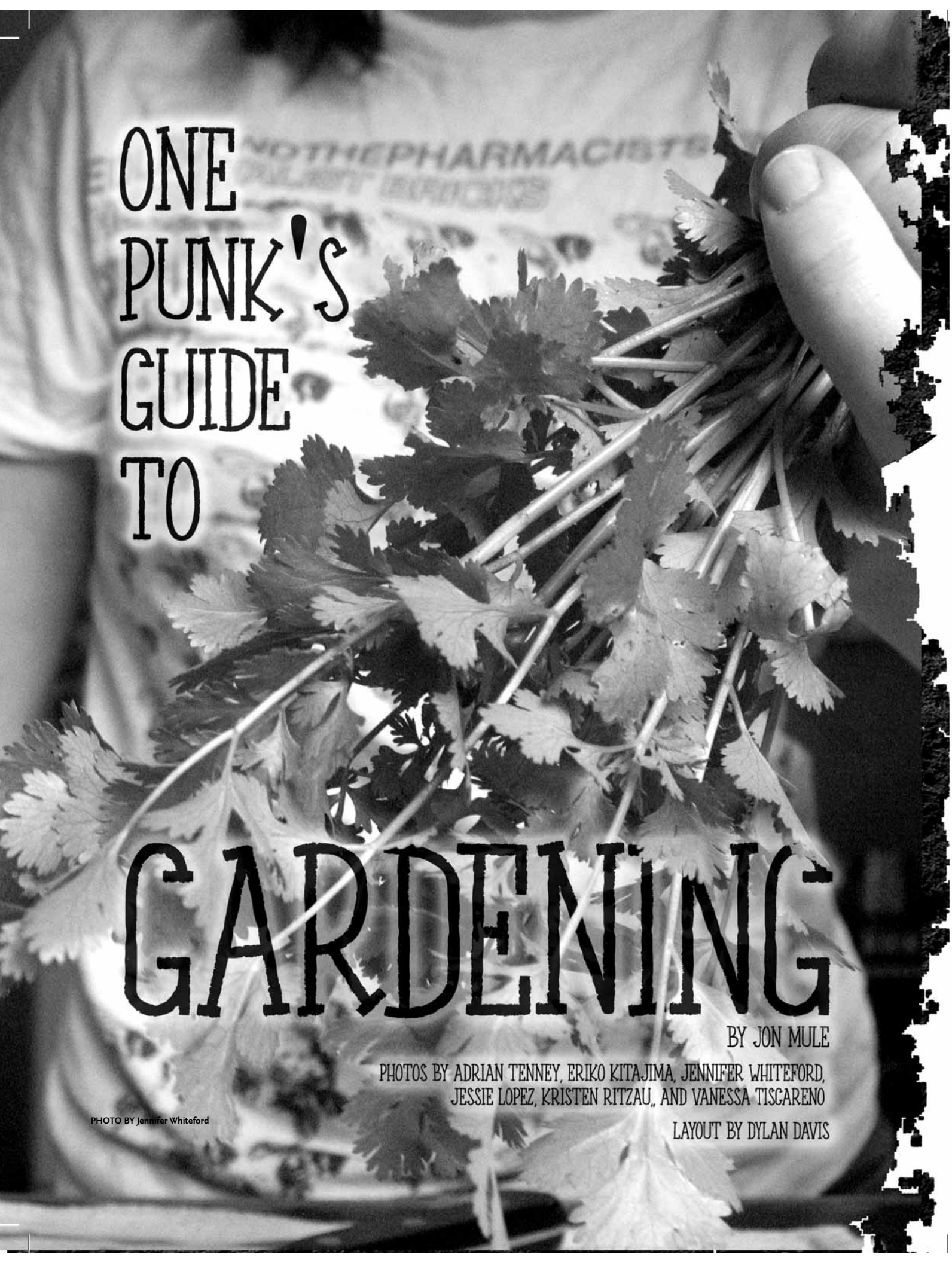

ONE PUNK'S GUIDE TO GARDENING

BY JON MULE

PHOTOS BY ADRIAN TENNEY, ERIKO KITAJIMA, JENNIFER WHITEFORD, JESSIE LOPEZ, KRISTEN RITZAU,, AND VANESSA TISCARENO

LAYOUT BY DYLAN DAVIS

PHOTO BY Jennifer Whiteford

"MOVEMENT IS LIFE"

Today is President's Day. I don't have to go to work. If I wanted, I could spend the whole day listening to the Low Culture record I just got in the mail and reading some comics that have been stacked up on my nightstand for too long. Or I could go with the calendar theme and watch *JFK* or *Dr. Strangelove*. It could be a lazy day off but I am behind schedule and need to get some dirty work done outside.

After a cup of coffee and a quick review of the headlines, I go to my local nursery to buy plants and seeds. It is mid-February in Southern California and time to start thinking about the spring and summer and what I want to plant in the garden boxes in my front and back yards. My number one priority is usually fruits and vegetables, but today I'm thinking about drought-tolerant, flowering plants. I buy some Mexican Marigolds, Allyson Heather, and Butterfly Bush. Come spring, these should be settled in and producing a colorful assortment of flowers. The flowers will attract plant-pollinating insects, while the leaves themselves will provide shade for manure-dropping and pest-gobbling birds and lizards. The more movement going on in my front yard, the better. Movement is life.

As I'm in the front yard, digging at the freshly rained-on ground, I notice the teenage girl down the street has spiky pink hair and a Germs back patch on her denim vest. Either I have never seen her before, or she went through a spiritual experience, accepted Joey Ramone into her heart, and just turned punk this weekend. I think I should bring her a copy of Razorcake later.

When I was a teenager, the same age as the pink-haired Germs fan, I wondered what it would be like to grow up punk. "What will it be like when I get old?" Milo painstakingly asked the cosmos on the Descendents' *Everything Sucks* album. For the most part, I think teenage me would be happy with who I have become. Granted, I am not the guitar player for Social Distortion, but career choices and musical tastes are bound to change over time. The most important thing to me is that I like my life and the work I do. I don't have to wear a suit or tie to work and I get to review music for the Cake. I still go to shows when I want. But if you had told the sixteen-year-old me that I would be a thirty-five-year-old gardener, or that I would consider gardening an extension of my idea of a punk ethos, I would have thought you were out of your mind. Gardening was something my grandmother did and she is far from punk. She spent her career as a nurse in a psychiatric hospital and still considers the cold and robot-like Nurse Ratched to be the true hero of *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest,* as opposed to the free-spirited and charismatic anti-establishment antihero, Randle McMurphy. My brother and I tease her about that whenever we see her. True story.

Figuring out that a seed could be placed in the ground to produce more fruit is the greatest technological advancement in the history of the world. Sadly, once humanity created agriculture it also saw the need to create fences, armies, laws, and boundary-defending civilizations. Some, like cultural critic and author Daniel Quinn, point out this is around the same time people started to talk about a debt of sin that separated humanity and the gods. The divine was no longer visible in the natural world that needed to be tamed in order to grow crops, but was living high above our heads and keeping track of our right and wrong doings.

I cannot state emphatically enough how this simple agricultural progression—for better or worse—drastically altered human history, politics, and religion. It didn't take long for agricultural societies to become industrial countries and for industrial countries to become filled with computer-isolated, social media-fueled, trained monkeys. Even the president of the United States can't show some restraint and get off of his fucking Twitter account. In this context, I consider it a revolutionary act to get off the computer, go outside, and plant a seed in the dirt.

WENDELL BERRY, THE MAD FARMER

"AS A GARDENER, I AM CHOOSING TO REDEFINE SOME OF THE MOST VITAL CONNECTIONS THAT HUMAN BEINGS NEED TO MAKE IN ORDER TO LIVE."

I first considered the countercultural implications of growing a garden in college, at an open mic, when a friend of mine stood up to read Wendell Berry's powerful poem "Manifesto: The Mad Farmer Liberation Front." I had never been introduced to this man before but his opening words sounded like they could have been pulled from any number of dystopian punk songs in my record collection:

> ***Love the quick profit, the annual raise,***
> ***vacation with pay. Want more***
> ***of everything ready-made. Be afraid***
> ***to know your neighbors and to die.***
> ***And you will have a window in your head.***
> ***Not even your future will be a mystery***
> ***any more. Your mind will be punched in a card***
> ***and shut away in a little drawer.***
> ***When they want you to buy something***
> ***they will call you. When they want you***
> ***to die for profit they will let you know.***

Berry described with precision the kind of life I was afraid of entering into after college, the kind of life that teenage Jon Mule would be ashamed of. The "ready-made" life of fear and caution, "shut away in a little drawer." He goes on to describe beautifully what a meaningful life and death might look like in this world. I was hooked. Who was this "mad farmer" who wrote with the urgency of a Black Panther or hardcore singer? Wendell Berry, I came to learn, is a simple man: a Kentucky-native, teacher, writer, and farmer. He's an octogenarian who still uses a mule and plow to work his farm. For me, his books and influence have been a few small but pivotal steps toward answering the monstrous and never-ending questions I have about how to remain human in an increasingly inhumane, capital-worshipping world. A seed was planted, you could say.

A couple years later, the same year I was introduced to Razorcake, is the year I decided to get serious about gardening. I took a Master Gardener course through the UC Davis extension program in East L.A., and found the connection—for me—between the DIY of Razorcake's punk and the do-it-yourself of growing flowers and food in my own backyard or public community space. As a gardener, I am choosing to redefine some of the most vital connections that human beings need to make in order to live. This is base-level one on Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, the idea that humans cannot experience belonging or self-actualization until their most basic, physiological needs are met. My relationship to food, to my community, to the water, and to my neighbors all come into play when I engage in local gardening.

Like an anarchist choosing to redefine her relationship between law and order, or a skateboarder renegotiating the intended purpose of a set of courthouse stairs, DIY gardeners are constantly choosing how they define their surroundings and the necessary elements of life they partake.

In my late twenties, as I became a better gardener and began forming my own bands, I started to notice this crossover between my two worlds. Some of the same people hosting house shows for

local and touring punk bands were also working together to support backyard agriculture, growing gardens, and occasionally raising chickens. It was reminiscent of the famous Dial House in Essex, England, where members of the legendary Crass made their home available to artists and travelers. I have repeatedly seen a connection between the people who choose DIY punk and those who want to take more control over their food through gardening. Both are choosing to shun the big, pre-packaged industries in favor of something closer to home and closer to the truth.

COMPOST: ONE PUNK'S TRASH

"EVERYTHING, EVEN TRASH, CAN BE USEFUL"

Specifically, I am an organic gardener. In the simplest terms, I do not use pesticides or chemical fertilizers. I could go into detail about why I feel so strongly about this, but I will spare you the scientific minutia and just include some greatest hits. Leviathan-like agricultural conglomerates and their harmful chemicals are responsible for topsoil erosion in the U.S. Studies show that most of the good, American earth that built up over millions of years is now sitting at the bottom of the Gulf of Mexico. As well, the decline of bee populations has been linked to the use of pesticides that, despite the picture on the bottle, don't discriminate between an aphid and a honeybee, and thus threaten the future of an alarming number of the foods and flowers we enjoy.

The trick to being an organic gardener, step number one, is compost. In composting, an even mix of carbon and nitrogen-rich elements break down to create an organic mix that looks like dark earth and smells like the forest after the rain. The carbon-rich material (or "brown") needed for compost can be dried leaves, wood chips, shredded newspaper, unbleached coffee filters, or brown paper bags. The nitrogen-rich (or "green") waste is most of the uncooked scraps that come out of the kitchen. Fruits and vegetables that have gone bad in the fridge or have not been used at meals, old coffee grounds, and broken egg shells are common green wastes. Another nice additive is a sprinkling of chicken manure or, if you are a lightweight who doesn't follow through on commitments, the leftover wine or beer that has been sitting out all night in the bottom of open cans and bottles. While you were sleeping, these have been collecting bacteria that will help break down all of the elements in the compost bin.

Other than sunlight and water, compost is undoubtedly the best thing for your garden. Any gardener worth her dirt will tell you how important this relatively simple practice is. To paraphrase Wendell Berry, old growth forests never need to be fertilized. The natural compost that makes up the forest floor provides the perfect topsoil for their extended health.

One common misconception about compost is that it stinks. This is false. If your compost stinks, there is a problem. Often this can be remedied by adding more of the brown, carbon-heavy materials. Some shredded newspaper or old corn husks should take the funk away soon enough. Another potential challenge is the attraction of rodents. I have seen raccoons, lizards, and birds eating or making a shelter out of my pile. I tend to geek out at this in my suburban corner of Los Angeles but if this is something that you would like to avoid, there are many ways to tightly seal a bin and keep those varmints out.

Ultimately, the beauty of composting is that nothing is left to waste. Everything, even trash, can be useful. It's pretty amazing to

PHOTO BY Kristen Ritzau

QUICK TIPS TO START A GARDEN

* **Find a garden mentor and ask lots of questions. Most gardeners love to teach and share.**

* **Decide what you want to grow (food, flowers) and find a sunny spot with easy access to water.**

* **Plant seedlings and plants according to the seasons in your area.**

* **Find excuses to spend time in the garden. Get a good chair and read there, drink there, make phone calls from there. This will allow you time to notice when pests or weeds or seasons are taking their toll and you will be more likely to react.**

* **Be patient. This takes time. Plants will die. Don't get discouraged.**

* **Share the work and the wealth. Invite others to plant and eat with you.**

PHOTO BY Jennifer Whiteford

SOUTH CENTRAL FARMERS

The South Central Farmers occupied fourteen acres of land in South Central Los Angeles from 1994 to 2006. The land was offered to the farmers as a chance to heal the community and clean up the mess that was left after the fiery chaos of the 1992 L.A. rebellion. The community garden was the largest of its kind in the United States. It was a true example of what could be done to bring healthy food to urban areas if resources and priorities were rearranged. In the end, business interests and dollar signs influenced then Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa and the L.A. City Council in a series of backroom deals. These deals were heavily contested in court by the farmers and their lawyers. The farmers lost. A team of bulldozers and cops in riot gear forcefully removed the farmers, their families, and a crowd of protesters who had been working to raise money to buy the property. Since then, a number of the original farmers have moved north of L.A. to the San Joaquin Valley, while others continue to garden smaller settings in South Central L.A. and sell their goods at local farmers markets. A fascinating and more detailed depiction of their struggle to survive is in the 2008 Oscar-nominated documentary, *The Garden*.

eat an apple, toss the core into the compost bin, and then later spread the compost on the roots of the apple tree. When you experience the closed-loop cycle of this process, you realizing how fucking stupid things like plastic bags and Styrofoam—trash that will last thousands of years—actually are.

Another benefit of maintaining a "cold" compost bin, one that sits and breaks down over time, is the volunteers. These are plants that grow from the seeds of resilient kitchen scraps right out of the compost bin. At the end of October, I almost always include the crushed and smashed remnants of neighborhood pumpkins in my compost mix. And without fail, a new pumpkin plant is growing out of the pile come springtime. If there is a more hopeful sight to see than new food growing out of a pile of waste, I cannot think of it.

DON'T NEED YOU: ON KILLING YOUR LAWN

"CIVILIZATION SEEMS TO LIKE TO CREATE AS MANY PROBLEMS AS IT CLAIMS TO SOLVE"

Let's talk about public enemy number one: lawns. I fucking hate them. Grass at the local park is fine. Grass can be good for playing soccer. Grass is great for rolling around with a loved one on a blanket. But the front lawns that make up the majority of plants grown in the United States are utterly worthless. They provide shelter for nothing, feed nothing, and are good for next to nothing. The American hive mind always wants to package its worst ideas in the biggest and brightest of packages, like gas-guzzling SUVs or sugar-frosted breakfast cereal in cartoon-decorated boxes. Consider the neighbor awkwardly peering over his fence into the yard of people he doesn't care to know or learn about, just to make sure their green patch of inedible shit is as wastefully watered as his own. For those of us who live in desert climates like Southern California, where water is all the more precious and limited, this over-watering of our status symbol is truly tragic.

Look no further than a video gone viral, of Orange County asshole and LAPD officer Kevin Ferguson pulling a gun on a group of children for walking across his lawn, for the kind of mania this obsession with the perfectly maintained patch of turf can create. On my more nosy days, I get annoyed seeing people in my neighborhood pouring gallons upon gallons of water onto their front lawns. (I live in Los Angeles where the realities and discussions of drought have been a mainstay for as long as I can remember.) I never see my neighbors use the lawn, so it seems as if the only purpose of their green grass is to water it. Why? For what? Civilization seems to like to create as many problems as it claims to solve in this respect.

There are a small number of people who are starting to get it, and I see more and more people in Southern California transitioning their front yards from grass to drought-tolerant, local and native landscaping. Since I started doing this, I have noticed a lot more life in my front yard. On any given day, I find lizards, doves, hummingbirds, butterflies, grasshoppers, and bees occupying the space outside my front door. I never saw any of these things in my yard when I was keeping up over-watered grass. (The only life present was the occasional neighborhood dog, stopping to shit on my lawn.) I see these living things as a sign of health. I have transformed my front yard from a dead symbol of middle-class security to a healthy micro-ecosystem. As the saying goes, gardening is cheaper than therapy, and you get tomatoes. And eggplant, and arugula, and herbs, and flowers. Since I began gardening, I have been introduced to a wonderful and diverse group of activists, environmentalists, localists, hippies,

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punks, anarchists, Buddhists, dieticians, critics of culture, writers, documentary filmmakers, community life groups, farmers, scientists, students, beekeepers, and my own neighbors. I have met people who participated in the 2006 protests against the destruction of the community-run South Central Farm, as well as people from different countries, religions, and socio-economic classes. I recently went to the home of a Muslim woman in my community who was allowing local beekeepers to place hives in her citrus and avocado orchard. There I met a Spanish-speaking man grazing his herd of goats on the weeds that grew in between her trees.

Our shared connection to the food we eat and the process it involves led us to a meeting that might have never taken place in our regular social circles. Gardening has taken me out of the self-imposed ghetto of my own complaints and whiny helplessness and allowed me to meet a wide range of people who are actively seeking to make the earth a better place. It is a beautiful thing. Another world is possible, indeed.

APARTMENT, SCHOOL, AND COMMUNITY GARDEN

"THERE ARE LAWNS LEFT TO KILL AND SEEDS TO BE PLANTED IN THEIR PLACE"

No one should assume they need to own land or even live in a home with a yard in order to participate in a garden. I have gardened spaces in a wide variety of settings and under different communal conditions. The first garden space I could call my own was a small chunk of land on the property of a Lutheran church, near my apartment in Morgan Hill, Calif. The head minister there, a kind and progressive woman who I still call a friend, invited her congregants and their neighbors to grow their own food together. At the same time, a coworker of mine was helping our clients, teenage addicts, to grow vegetables on the grounds of the group home where they lived.

I have grown tomatoes and basil in buckets and planters on the balconies of apartments I have lived in. Also, there are an ever-growing number of community gardens in urban and suburban areas all over the United States. I can think of at least three homes within fifteen miles of my house where the owners have welcomed others to grow gardens on their land. One of these calls itself an "urban homestead" and also houses a small group of free range chickens.

Currently, one of the gardens I manage is at the public high school where I work. I teach students with special needs job skills and managing money as part of a work-training curriculum. There are other nearby schools where volunteers from the community work with children to get them interested in locally grown food and the process of hard work. Community-supported agriculture (or CSA) groups sometimes offer shares of food to volunteers who come and plant, water, and weed their grounds. Sometimes it takes work to research and find them, but the opportunities out there are wide and varied.

GUERILLA GARDENING: UNFUCK THE WORLD

"AS THE SAYING GOES, GARDENING IS CHEAPER THAN THERAPY, AND YOU GET TOMATOES"

In recent years, I have noticed an increased interest in guerilla gardening. I have seen websites and independent zines dedicated to the process. In short, it is the act of gardening on land that does not belong to you. This can be done on empty dirt lots, large bare public parkways, or the tiniest patch of dirt on any urban street corner. South Central Los Angeles-based, self-professed "gangsta gardener" and community activist Ron Finley has brought light to this concept in his talks on how to combat "food deserts," urban areas where liquor stores and fast food restaurants tend to be the overwhelming option when it comes to purchasing food. Finley talks about the notice he got from the city of Los Angeles that required him to maintain the city-owned parkway space in front of his home. Rather than fill the space in with expensive and wasteful turf, Finley turned the space into a food garden and has spent much of his time in recent years promoting the idea to others.

Guerilla gardening, along with community gardens and local food cultures, can be one piece of a global resistance toward the interest of lobbyist-backed, pesticide-spreading, corn-syrup guzzling, cancer-inducing markets, and agriculture bills that have favored war, big business, and the destruction of ecosystems on this planet. It is, in its simplest form, the very embodiment of the idea of taking back and reclaiming public land in the name of the common good. In the words of a T-shirt that Finley often wears in his online videos, guerilla gardening and local agriculture is the idea that we can "unfuck the world."

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Jon Mule teaches social studies and gardening to special education students in Whittier, Calif. Sometimes he writes songs and plays them with The Bloody Westerns, who he insists are not a country band. He can be contacted at sandbergedwards@gmail.com.

PHOTO BY Vanessa Tiscareno

PHOTO BY Jessie Lopez

MY WORLD, MY BODY

"LEARNING TO ACCEPT FAILURE IS ONE OF THE EARLY LESSONS THAT A GARDNER HAS TO LEARN"

One of my first gardening mentors used to say that she had killed more plants than I had ever planted. She gave this one-liner as an invitation to embrace being a fuckup in the process of gardening, encouraging us to not be overwhelmed by failure. Learning to accept failure is one of the early lessons that a gardener has to learn. There is always going to be a patch of weeds or gang of plant-munching slugs, or a heat wave, drought, and frost, to remind you that you are not in control.

Even as I write this piece on all the things that gardening helps me to resist, I'm reminded of all the ways I enslave myself to those things on a daily basis. I use fossil fuels to commute around Los Angeles. I forget to check the tags as to where and in what conditions my clothing was made. I choose to ignore the damage that is done in the name of quick and cheap fast food whenever I am too lazy to prepare a meal. For me, putting good work into the garden is not about achieving some integrity or perfection in life, but about learning to be a better human animal. Working in the garden reminds me of what is important—that small acts of resistance are possible and matter over time.

In Between the World and Me, author Ta-Nehisi Coates' pens a book-length letter to his young son on living in a world ruled by the violence and injustice of white supremacy, one that Coates's work has been a meaningful voice against. In one passage, Coates tells his son, "This is your country, this is your world, this is your body, and you must find some way to live within the all of it." I do not want to diminish the meaning of those words in their original context. They are visceral, powerful and from one specific man to his one specific son.

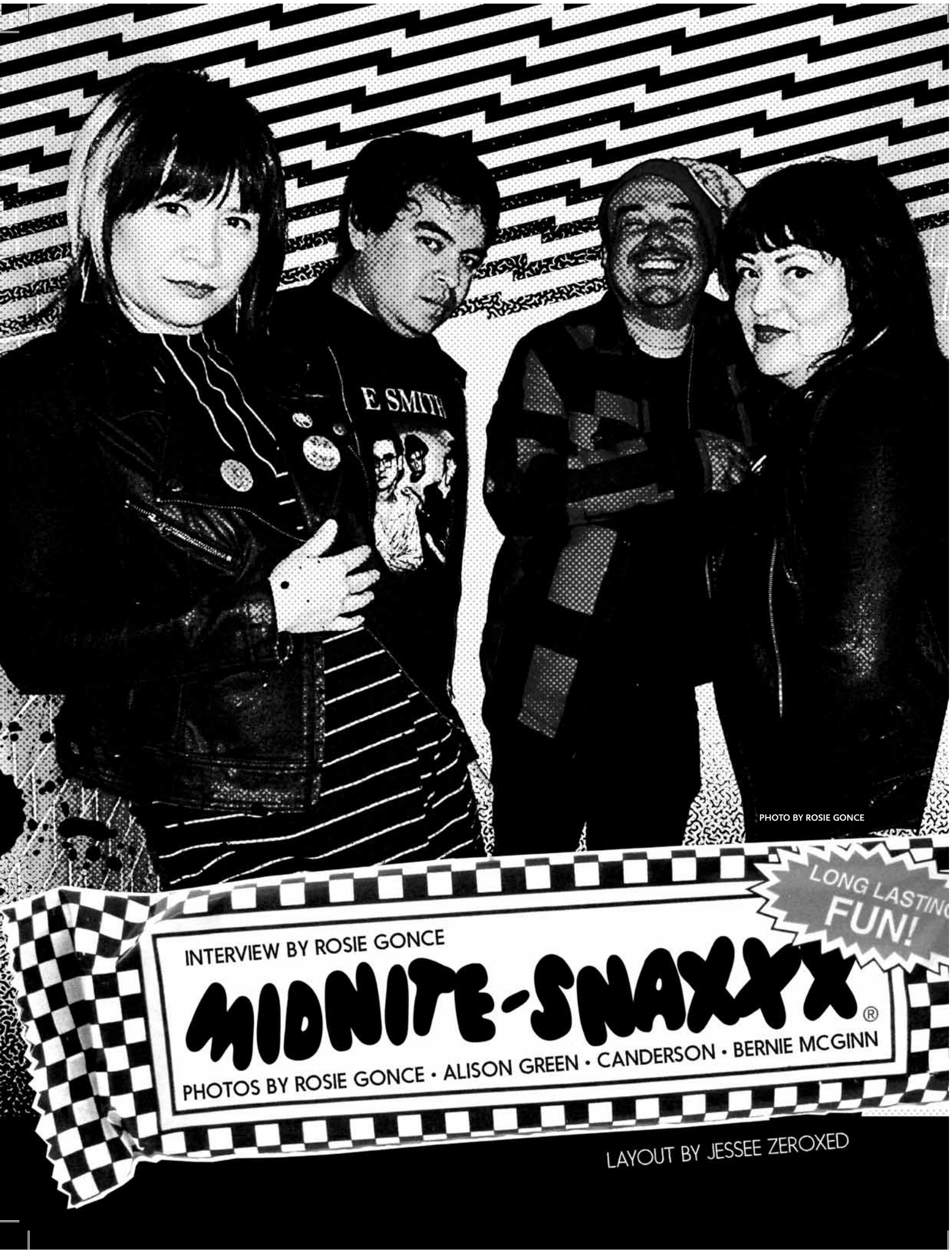
As a high school teacher, I read these words to my U.S. History classes any time we deal with the telling of horrific truths about the flag and country that the voice on the monitor asks us to pledge allegiance to each day. I remind my students that these stories we tell, these events we remember, happened to real people in real time, and we, somehow, are an extension of them, right or wrong, for better or for worse. That, of course, is not where the story ends. We, too, are real people living in real time and there is a lot of good work that needs to be done: there is shit to rally against, protest songs to be written, new alliances to be made. There are lawns left to kill and seeds to be planted in their place.

I have found repeatedly that the small communities I get to participate in, be they activist collectives, punk cooperatives, or groups of gardeners that remind me of my grandmother, draw me into the reality of Coates' words. From bending down to plant a seed or pick a carrot, to making a homegrown meal with friends, gardening reminds me that the best things in life—and a hope for the future—lie in doing good work and sharing the rewards with others. The elderly woman who lives just a few doors down from the pink-haired punk knocked on my window a few months ago and asked if she could have some of the tomatoes in my front yard. I told her that as long as she left four or five for my wife and me, she could take as many as often as she wanted. That is what they are there for. After tomatoes and corn, building local community is the best byproduct of gardening.

Our country, our world, our bodies.

FURTHER READING

The Art of the Commonplace: The Agrarian Essays of Wendell Berry
The One Straw Revolution: An Introduction to Natural Farming
by Masanobu Fukuoka
Animal, Vegetable, Miracle: A Year of Food Life **by Barbara Kingsolver**
Private Lives of Garden Birds **by Calvin Simonds**
Teaming with Microbes: A Gardener's Guide to the Soil Food Web
by Jeff Lowenfells and Wayne Lewis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MIDNITE-SNAXXX®
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Midnite Snaxxx is a passion-packed project filled with four individuals who, at the end of the day, just want to have fun. The Oakland, Calif. band has a love of—and a joy for—creating punk music. They play fast, gritty, punk rock that always has a hook. While it may appear that they sing about simple concepts, like space invaders, their lyrics dive deeper and are delivered with powerful, melodic female vocals riddled with in-your-face attitude and spunk. Midnite Snaxxx is at times reminiscent of the Buzzcocks and the Undertones with spastic drumming and driving guitars, but they add extra flavor with surfy guitar leads and walking bass lines that make it impossible not to want to dance.

It's evident from both their steady record releases over the years and natural drive to succeed as a band, they have a mature, endlessly progressive, and very realistic relationship with their musical careers. They're friends and they're focused. They share the same musical goals as they lift each other up to thrive as a unit. Through mutual respect, open-mindedness, critical thinking, and a constant sense of humor, Midnite Snaxxx aren't going anywhere, except exactly where they want to go.

Dulcinea Gonzales: guitar/lead vocals
Camylle Reynolds: bass/backup vocals
Sammy Gutierrez: drums
Christopher Santamaria: guitar

Rosie: How did you all meet?
Dulcinea: Through music. Always, always through music. I've known Chris for a long time. He played in Loli & The Chones in the '90s and I met Camylle from going to shows and…
Camylle: We played a couple shows together.
Dulcinea: And Sammy, same thing.
Sammy: I think I met you through Rene.
Dulcinea: Yeah, our old bass player Rene. They played in a band that was kinda like a crazy garage, funny, outfit called the Latinos.
Sammy: It was Mexican—horribly crappy garage band. But crappy in a good way!
Camylle: I've always loved Dulcinea's songwriting. That's one of the main reasons I joined the band, because she was in charge and I liked that. I was like, "Sign me up!" She's very gifted in how she writes.
Chris: I was a fan of the Midnite Snaxxx before I joined.
Camylle: We all were!
Dulcinea: [laughs] It's a cult.
Camylle: Your groupies joined the band!
Sammy: I once said if I was a girl I would totally be in the band. Turns out I didn't need to be a girl!
Rosie: So when you all are not playing and touring, where do you work?
Dulcinea: I work at a wine shop. So I taste a lot of wine from around the world.
Chris: She's a wino, professional wino.
Dulcinea: Yep, I drink for a living and I specialize in Burgundy. It came from a love of food and wine.
Camylle: I'm in school right now. I'm getting my masters and teaching credential. I'm also a fitness instructor. I teach yoga and sculpt and cycle and pretty much everything gym-related.
Rosie: What age do you want to teach?
Camylle: I want to be a middle school teacher—either that or alternative education.
Rosie: Wow, middle school is a very special age. Not many people can do that.
Camylle: Maybe, but I've also done kindergarten and you have students puking and pissing everywhere. So it takes a special kind of person to also do the younger grades. Yeah, I like middle school. It can be a challenge because it looks like you can expect a lot from them, but they're still kids.
Dulcinea: That's why Camylle can deal with us! [laughs]
Sammy: I work for the city of San Francisco, in our deferred compensation department. I deal with people all day long. I basically enroll new hires and our members into the compensation plan. It's like a 401(k) but for city workers.
Dulcinea: It's a real job!
Sammy: Yeah, I gotta wake up at 5:45 AM tomorrow.
Chris: I have to wake up at 12:30 PM tomorrow, be at a restaurant, and cook for eight hours. Just at a regular kind—pastry, sandwich, soup, nothing fancy. The kind of place that gives me a lot of freedom to play music.
Rosie: That was actually my next question. How do you manage going on tour when you have a job?
Dulcinea: I think we're all pretty mature at this point. We don't have any illusions. We all have a lot of responsibilities. And we *all* do, so that works. And I think if you're in a band with a bunch of people who are like, "Let's just quit our jobs and do this!" that's great, but with this band it would never work. We know what we can do and what we can't. This year our big goal was to put out a record, and it came out. Now we want to do a big trip. We'll do a big trip in the fall. We're hoping to go to Japan and then the plans after that are to… [shrugs] see what happens.
Chris: We're good at planning ahead as a group.
Camylle: We're organized!
Chris: We also try to average about one show per month and we don't really push it unless it's a special occasion.
Camylle: Yeah we like Friday/Saturday shows, too. Monday/Tuesday stuff doesn't fly in our band.
Dulcinea: It's a sacrifice. The way we're set up—and the way most people are set up—is you get two weeks vacation, if you're lucky, and then to have a life in that two weeks off, you get sick, go see your family or have a vacation with your significant other, or play music in another town. So we make those decisions. Luckily, we're all pretty good friends so it's fun for us. So it's not just the band.

IF YOU'RE IN YOUR TWENTIES AND YOU LIKE PLAYING MUSIC, YOU SHOULD JUST QUIT YOUR JOB. SERIOUSLY, LIFE SHOULD BE MORE ABOUT FUN AND LESS WORK.

Camylle: Yeah we have a good time, we get along.
Dulcinea: So it's a sacrifice and sometimes you have to work at your job to do it.
Chris: Yeah, but if you're in your twenties and you like playing music, you should just quit your job. Seriously, just quit your job and just play music because life should be more about fun and less work.
Rosie: Good advice!
Dulcinea: Yeah quit your job and hit the road!
Rosie: Camylle, tell me about your kids.
Camylle: I have two boys—ten and twelve years old. They're great. I have a great family situation that allows me to do the things that I like to do, which, I hate to say, may be unusual for a mom. I have a lot of things that I can pursue because of the fact that I have a lot of support from my family. They're just great; they're like sunshine in my life. My boys are great. They give me a balance too, because I have "the Snaxxx" and I have a very active life in music too. I write for *Razorcake* and I write for *Maximum Rock'n'roll*. I'm also in school and I have another band too. So I feel like I have a good spread going on right now; a little bit of everything.

Rosie: What do your boys think of you playing music?
Camylle: Their view of music is very much—because I'm in a band, Bad Daddies, with my husband, too—but their view is almost just from me. They say things like, 'My *Mom*'s in a band.' That's what they talk about. "Our *Mom* plays an instrument," or "I think girls are more interested in music than boys." My sons have actually said that before and I'm like, "Wow." So their view of music is almost from a female point of view, which I don't care to fix. It's just what they see going on. And if they like music, then that's fine. We have instruments, we have pianos, we have basses, we have guitars, we have lots of vinyl. If they want to experiment in music, they can, but right now they're kind of anti-music. But that's okay. I don't want to push them. If they like music, I want them to enjoy it. And I don't see any other purpose for music other than enjoyment.
Rosie: Has the political atmosphere been affecting your performance and your music?
Dulcinea: It affects every aspect of my life. Unfortunately.
Camylle: I feel it twenty-four hours a day.
Dulcinea: Since we've moved into this…
Camylle: Trump era.
Dulcinea: This new regime, it's been constant struggle.
Camylle: Every day.
Chris: It's a weird push because when we meet up for practice, we're like, "God, can you fucking believe this last thing?" and it gives us like a …
Camylle: A release!
Chris: Also, it comes out even if it's a song we've been playing for a long time. In the practice session you can feel that push because of the things happening around us. And then that sustains into other performances.
Dulcinea: We're fortunate that we have an outlet. Some people just like to run five miles.
Camylle: I'll do that, too!
Dulcinea: Those are the ways you get your frustrations out: exercising your body and your mind. What we get to do here is an expression of all those things. It's cool and it couldn't be more timely.
Rosie: I know it can be difficult to describe yourself, so instead can you all go around and tell us something about each other?
Dulcinea: Camylle's awesome. I like her strength. I like how she's very upfront. She doesn't shy away from anything. In my experience, when you give her something, she takes it, she owns it, and becomes the master of it. And it's awesome to be around people who are serious like that. And it's also amazing to have conversations that are "here" [holds hand above head] politically and socially within the band. Sometimes you're in a band and you don't get deep into stuff like that—or maybe you don't share the same views—but since we have a lot of like views that are very, very progressive it's pushed the band, too. Camylle has definitely been a force in the band for that. And also being a woman playing music, being a woman of color, living in the times that we do, it's important.
Camylle: I've always though Dulcinea was awesome from the first time I saw her. She's just one of those ladies where you just see and you're like, "Oh my god, she's so awesome on stage!" Almost to the point where you can't really talk to her. You're like, "Oh my gosh, should I say something? Should I tell her I liked the set?" And I *love* women who intimidate me.
Dulcinea: I always get that!
Camylle: Because when I find a woman who intimidates me, I'm like, "I want her to be my friend." I love that. Dulcinea is a strong feminist. I look up to her. She's doing awesome things with her life, she has cool interests, and I love her songwriting and everything she's done. I have much respect for the way she's lived her life and the decisions she's made. Total respect for Dulcinea.
Rosie: What about Chris?
Sammy: Chris has a very kind heart, so open-minded, very knowledgeable, and just always there for you. He always said whenever I was ever having problems "Hey, call me if you need to meet up." So that's what I love about Chris. He's a very personable, warm guy.
Everyone: Awwwww! [laughs]
Camylle: It's true. Chris is a sweetheart.

PHOTO BY CANDERSON

Dulcinea: Also, I would say that his role in the band is he'll come in with the most "out there" kind of way of thinking about things. I'm pretty sensible and earthy—which kind of throws me sometimes where I'm uncomfortable—but then when I allow myself to open up to it, I'm like, "Oh okay, I think I get it." And it opens up everything, musically. When someone has something off the wall, the best thing you can do is to try it.
Camylle: Yeah, Chris will come up with a little riff that's really kind of "out there," but then it gets in your brain and, suddenly, the song doesn't sound right without him doing that weird thing.
Dulcinea: You definitely hear Chris's personality in his guitar playing, with his little phrases that he does. And they're little things but they're totally Chris and I would've never come up with them on my own. Never in a million years.
Rosie: And Sammy?
Dulcinea: Sammy is our "Tommy Ramone." When he came to the band, he said everything that I wanted to hear. He came with enthusiasm; he's sweet, he's friendly. We come here once a week and it's like "Yay! We get to see each other!"
Chris: This may sound corny but sometimes I'm playing at practice or at a show and I try to get—I hate it say it—centered, and I'll look at Sam. Watching him play is what brings me into the place.
Camylle: He's like the glue! He sets the pace. If Sammy's on and you link yourself with Sammy, everything's gonna be okay.
Dulcinea: So when you get us all together…
Chris: Group hug!
[Everyone laughs.]
Rosie: It really seems like you're doing it right: you play music, you have jobs, you have fun...
Chris: And were friends. More than anything, we're friends.
Dulcinea: And we're here to make music, to create, to put out records. Those are our goals.
Camylle: It's true. We're a driven band. We're not just fucking around. We have goals, we meet those goals. We play the shows that we think are important.
Chris: But our goals they're not "rock star" goals, they're realistic. We're just enjoying doing this thing together.
Sammy: We all have lives, we all have jobs and families, and we're at the age where we just want to have fun—whether it's touring in the south for seven days straight or going over to Japan for a couple weeks—we'll use our vacation time and have fun!
Camylle: Yeah, we're doing this to have fun.
Sammy: Definitely not for the money.
[Everyone laughs.]
Rosie: What advice would you give to young musicians just starting out, specifically what advice would you give to young women?
Dulcinea: First of all, don't let the idea or fear stop you from doing something. Everyone has to start out somewhere. I remember when I was starting out and someone asked me, "Do you play guitar?"—because I had been a closeted acoustic guitar player for a very long time. And I would say "Oh, you know, I play a little guitar,' and then when I finally got to the space to play with them, I was like, "Oh! We're all on the same level!"

Not like that's gonna happen to everyone, but you gotta start somewhere. Don't be afraid to start writing songs and see what comes out of your heart and head. And for young women, specifically, if they're into punk, I would tell them to go listen to The Slits. Go listen to all these women in music who have been incredible to look for inspiration, because there are plenty of them.
Camylle: When I was growing up, I grew up in a very small town. I did not have a lot of access to music—other than what was playing on the radio—and it was all very male-centered. So I didn't necessarily feel included in that. I found riot grrrl later, but I think if you find something female-centered that speaks to you, it can make a difference. I was put off by a lot of very male-centered punk when I was younger. It just didn't speak to me. It just didn't. So find something that you like to listen to, that makes you think, "Oh I could do that!"
Rosie: That's pretty much the basis for the whole DIY culture. You see it and think, "I could do that!"
Camylle: Yeah! "I can do it!" Right? Yeah! And that's really important. It's a different scene from when I was growing up in the '80s and '90s. Now, you have more access to different bands. So find something you connect to.
Rosie: Speaking of bands being called "female-fronted," how do you feel about Midnite Snaxxx being called a female-fronted band?
Camylle: I love the fact that we're female-fronted and that's one of the major reasons I joined the Snaxxx.
Rosie: It seems like there's a struggle between people wanting to embrace the term "female-fronted" and then other people just wanting to be called a *band* and not having the label.
Camylle: And that's okay, too.
Dulcinea: I've been playing in bands a long time. In the '90s it was way more tokenized to be a girl in a band because that was a selling point. "Oh, there's chicks in this band!" and that was a thing. But now I think younger women are more empowered and they're coming from a stronger place. I think things are getting better in that way, but there is also this community of women who want to see other women excel, so being in a female-fronted band

PHOTO BY BERNIE McGINN

I LOVE WOMEN WHO INTIMIDATE ME. WHEN I FIND A WOMAN WHO INTIMIDATES ME, I'M LIKE, "I WANT HER TO BE MY FRIEND."

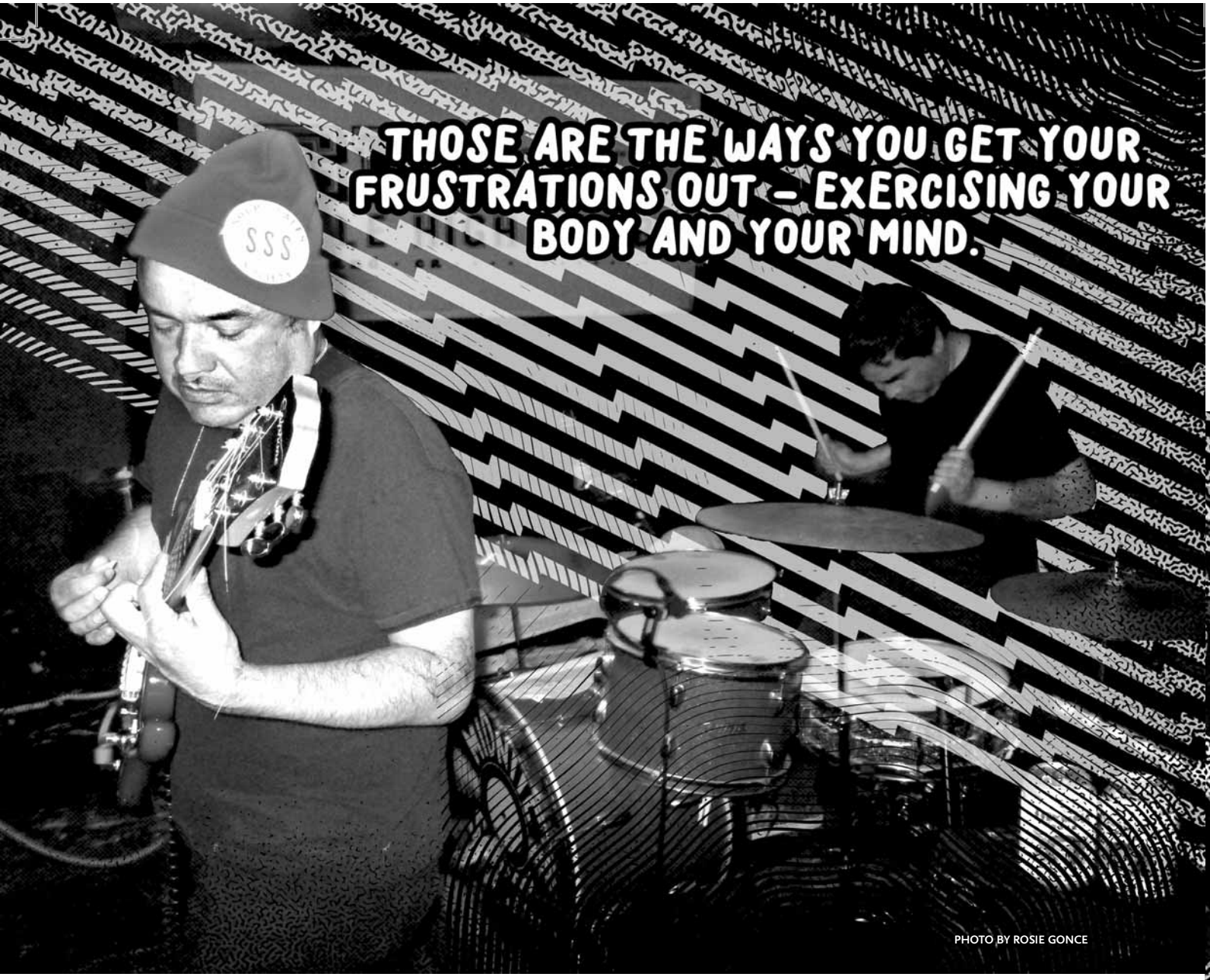

PHOTO BY ROSIE GONCE

and celebrating that is amazing, too. In our band, we have that about us—we're all mixed race and have had similar struggles in our lives.

Camylle: And we have men who like playing with women. You can get in those situations where it's not welcome—or there are different dynamics—but the Snaxxx have never had issues with that, with gender dynamics.

Dulcinea: I like to think of our band as a good band, no matter what our gender.

Camylle: I totally respect the fact that people don't want to be gendered, too. I think that's totally valid. I welcome and accept the fact that they don't want to be called "girl bands" or "female-fronted" or anything like that. If someone wants to be considered "female-fronted" or "femme" or "womyn with a Y," whatever, I think that should be respected. However you want to be seen, should be respected. I personally take a lot of pride in being called a female-fronted band. I wanna own it. I'm totally with it. When I see "female-fronted" anything, I'm like, "Oh! Let me take a look! Let me bookmark this!" Gender, personally to me, is important. But that's okay if you don't have those interests, too.

Chris: Yeah, I feel in agreement with that. But I wanna say for younger people of any gender, don't put all your eggs in the basket for working for the man. Listen to different kinds of music, not just punk, but if it's put out by a corporate output, don't bother! Listen to the stuff that's coming in through the back door. It doesn't even have to be on a record. Don't get stuck in a genre, trying to be "punk," just do what you want to do. Learn any kind of music you can. Learn to play because it's just gonna make you a better person, in general.

Camylle: A better musician, right?

Chris: A better musician. It's just gonna open your mind. Be open to art; don't get stuck in a genre.

Camylle: I'm mixed, white and Asian—I'll just keep it at that—and I didn't have a lot of role models. There was Melt Banana when I was growing up, and then there was the Asian guy in Smashing Pumpkins. And in my Asian family, there was no rock'n'roll and there was no punk. So as far as being a woman of color and listening to music—or expressing yourself in music—I didn't see a lot of that growing up. I was always into music at a young age but I didn't decide to partake in that until later in life, for whatever reason. I've always loved music. But have I always seen myself in music? No.

Sammy: When I was a teenager, all the cholos would come up to me and ask, "Why are you listening to this?" They would call me a "coconut," brown on the outside white on the inside. I think a lot of kids can also buy into that and think, "Yeah I can't listen to this," because their influences are the kids in the neighborhood, who are saying otherwise. It's a pain.

Dulcinea: It *is* a pain, but you gotta follow what you love. [Speaking to Sammy.] And you're a rock'n'roller.

Rosie: Do you see yourselves as role models?
Dulcinea: I shun away from a role model situation…
Camylle: Dulcinea is a role model. She's a rock'n'roller and she's still doing it. And I wanna be doing it…
Dulcinea: When you're my age. You can say it! [laughs] Yeah, I've had younger women come up to me and tell me how much they appreciate what I do—or the show, or whatever—and it always feels really nice, but it's hard to take that kind of compliment. But the way I've been a feminist is just living to raise men who get it. They're beautiful and empathetic and critical and they're not gonna be the men that I fear. I want to raise men who are beneficial to society. I don't want to group all men into a category, but a lot of the problems in the world have to do with insecure, aggressive men and I'm not going to raise two boys like that. So if I can have my children be decent human beings, then I have done my part.
Rosie: So awesome! Are there any common misconceptions about your band? Maybe we could set the record straight before we finish up our interview.
Dulcinea: For me personally, it's just exactly what Camylle was saying, that people get really intimidated by me and think they can't speak to me. And it's hilarious to me.
Chris: But you are super intimidating.
Sammy: You have a presence of a very strong woman.
Chris: Dulc is a very strong woman.
Dulcinea: It's not like someone's gonna come up to me and I'm gonna give them the hand. I've always got this, since I was a kid. My younger sister would always say, "My older sister's gonna beat you up!" and I never got in fights. *She* would get me in fights. That's what was so funny. It wasn't me, but I got a bad rep.
Rosie: You just emanate strength. It's fascinating that people are so scared of strong women.
Chris: To this day, I'm terrified.
[Everyone laughs.]
Rosie: So what's on the horizon for Midnite Snaxxx?
Camylle: More records! More shows!

midnitesnaxxx.bandcamp.com

PHOTO BY ALISON GREEN

my life. So if that makes me a role model, cool, but I would not go around saying that I thought I was a role model.
Camylle: That's very humble, but I think Dulcinea is totally a role model. I look up to Dulcinea and I kind of always have. As a mom, I can't help to feel—raising two boys—I have to be a role model. The other day, one of my boys was petting the cat and saying, "Oh you're such a fat cat." And my other son was like, "Don't body shame the cat!" The only reason they're saying that is because it's come from my mouth. I mean, they get it, and if they don't get it, I make sure they get it. They cannot escape me. I want

SO IF I CAN HAVE MY CHILDREN BE DECENT HUMAN BEINGS, THEN I HAVE DONE MY PART.

This DIY Project Called Survival:

Homelessness, Creativity, and a City in Crisis

By Cheryl Klein

Photos by Cheryl Klein

Layout by Becky Bennett

I began noticing the motor homes last year, but they must have started before that. They lined Figueroa Street in my northeast Los Angeles neighborhood—beige hulks with names like Arctic Fox, Bounder, Holiday Rambler, Pace Arrow, Winnebago. Simultaneous nods to Native Americans and rugged independence. They'd seen better days, as had their occupants.

Growing up, my family took exactly one kind of vacation. We camped in a 1979 Dodge Four Star motor home with rust-colored curtains that shed their rubber backing like bread crumbs in a forest. There was a map of the U.S. on a table that turned into a bed. We parked on the shoulders of lonely highways while my dad swore and tinkered with the engine. At one point he just started traveling with a spare alternator; that's how often it broke down.

I envied kids who stayed in hotel rooms and visited amusement parks. Seeing motor homes floods me with nostalgia, but also subtle shame. I know how the tilted oven cooks food unevenly. I've listened to John Denver and Neil Diamond on the eight-track tape deck. I've never been homeless or anywhere close, but I know the naked intimacy of pulling up in a car that also holds your underwear and your mustard-yellow, plastic toilet.

One day all the motor homes disappeared from Figueroa, only to pop up in smaller clusters elsewhere. The city seemed to be treating them like toadstools—easy to kick over, hard to extract at the roots. Someone spray painted "MOVE IT" in large black letters on the back of a motor home parked on Ave. 56. The owner moved it, to Ave. 54.

All this unfolded the same summer my partner and I moved out of the duplex where we'd lived for nine years without a single rent increase and emerged blinking into the harsh light of market rent in a gentrifying neighborhood. We were lucky—my dad ended up buying a house that we rent from him, which I jokingly (guiltily) refer to as my subsidized housing. Except that it's not really a joke at all.

This is a story about people under pressure in a city that may become a victim of its own financial fortune. It only took one Facebook post to find friends who'd found themselves without a place to sleep. That's the thing about homelessness: it's right there, if you're looking.

From Artist to "Auslander"

When Sharon was in her late twenties, a trifecta of shitty events befell her. She lost her job, she and her fiancé broke up, and her landlord decided to sell the building where they lived. With no new job on the horizon, she held yard sales, stored her remaining stuff in a friend's garden shed, and flew to Europe to hang out with some Austrian artists she'd met.

"I thought, 'Why not travel? Isn't that what all your white friends did after high school?'" Sharon is Korean-American, born and raised in Los Angeles by immigrant parents with whom she wasn't close. "At that point, I still believed I was landing on my feet."

With Vienna as her adopted home base, she had what she describes as a "fairytale" two years making art with her new friends. When she needed to leave the country to keep her visa current, she'd just take the train to Budapest for lunch.

When Austria's newly elected right-wing government began cracking down on "auslanders" (outsiders), she decided it was time to come home.

But without any economic or social resources, she no longer felt protected from ugly racist undercurrents. The world didn't see her as a UCLA grad and accomplished photographer who spoke four languages. It saw a brown person who quickly burned through the few couches she was offered.

"This was the start of the DIY project," she recalls. "You ask yourself 'How are you going to get these basic needs met?'"

She stayed in hotels and hostels that allowed her to pay weekly, telling herself it was a kind of artistic adventure: "I'm not homeless, I'm a vagabond. I won poetry slams in Vienna." She spent her days faxing her résumé from Kinkos. She applied for hundreds of jobs with no luck.

She decided to make a go of it in New York. She was ready to start the last leg of her drive on the morning two planes flew into the World Trade Center. With all roads to New York blocked literally and figuratively, she called an old friend who lived just outside Denver. He invited her to stay with him. His fiancée didn't love having some random chick camped on their couch. With her last resource exhausted, Sharon admitted to herself: "You're homeless. Just face the reality and do what you have to do."

What she had to do: stay in a women's shelter with a twenty-eight-day limit. Stay in other shelters. Take the only job she could find, counting money inside Kmart's vault on the graveyard shift.

"I'd never even *shopped* at a Kmart," she says.

The solitude of that $9-an-hour job suited her because she was still reeling from unprocessed traumas and felt like she had a big "homeless" sign on her forehead.

She saved enough from her part-time job to rent a series of rooms (often just converted closets) at $300 a month. She skimped on food and took toothpaste and toilet paper from places they wouldn't be missed.

"By the time the snow hit the ground after I'd been in Colorado a year, I felt like I was dying every day. Something had to change."

She came back to L.A., where she again found herself in the position of "wanting mercy and needing mercy. When I'd make friends, I'd wonder, 'Is this person going to help my recovery process so I'm not just a hamster on a wheel?'"

Conventional wisdom points to mental illness as a cause of homelessness. Less consideration is given to how homelessness itself—not to mention dealing with an infuriating labyrinth of bureaucratic, underfunded social service agencies—might cause mental illness. Sharon describes her experience as "a kaleidoscope of fragments. There was no cohesion. And I don't think I'm out of the tunnel yet."

She was diagnosed with severe depression and anxiety, but it was hard to heal when she was always in survival mode. She moved into a Long Beach apartment with her boyfriend and finally gave herself permission to put down roots. They came home from a trip to find everything they owned blackened by fire. The incident triggered all of Sharon's old traumas, while adding a new one to the roster.

Today Sharon has long-term, low-income housing, but that comes with its own set of problems—neighbors who have assaulted her and a difficult landlord. She struggles with what she calls "poverty consciousness," a fear of stepping outside her small zone of safety.

"There are good things that have come from this experience, too," she adds. "I'm an expert at minimalist living. I'm a non-consumer. My happiness quotient has changed, so that I can appreciate small, simple things." Today, more than sixteen years after she first became homeless, she feels ready to start a new chapter, whatever that may look like.

Conventional wisdom points to mental illness as a cause of homelessness. Less consideration is given to how homelessness itself might cause mental illness.

But if you're looking for the sort of "homeless to Harvard" story that Hollywood loves (that's the title of an actual Lifetime movie), you're going to have to look elsewhere. Hollywood and its adjacent neighborhoods have an estimated 3,600 homeless people. Los Angeles has 27,000 (source: Los Angeles County Homeless Services Authority).

The Homeless Czar

Technically it's been illegal to live in your car since 1983. But when fewer people did—back before the housing bubble popped, rental prices shot up, and the L.A. City Council declared a state of emergency on homelessness in 2015—it wasn't such a big issue. As L.A.'s stressed homeless started to butt up against its neo-urbanites, however, the city conducted sweeps, got sued, and lost. The city responded with a compromise in the form of L.A. Municipal Code 85.02, which went into effect in January 2017. It outlines when and where people can live in their cars.

The housing crisis is tangled and multifaceted, as are its potential solutions. The person tasked with untangling is Meg Barclay, who in October 2016 became the city's first Homelessness Coordinator. Colloquially, she is known as the Homeless Czar. She's also an old friend of my spouse. Over burritos one Saturday afternoon, Meg fills me in on patterns and proposed solutions (see sidebar).

Homelessness is partially the outcome of massive, chronic evictions in an economy where landlords can buy relatively cheap property and rent it for 75% or 80% of their tenants' monthly incomes. When your budget has so little wiggle room, any setback—a funeral, a car repair, late fees for other payments

you failed to make—can land you on the street. I used to assume America's legacy of racism *caused* class discrepancies, but didn't make life much harder once you were at the bottom. Anyone as naïve as I was should read Matthew Desmond's excellent *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City.* Desmond reveals, via statistics and heartbreaking case studies, how much easier it is for an unemployed, drug-addicted white felon to find an apartment than for a black single mother.

"If you could remove one big obstacle that's keeping people from getting into affordable housing, what would it be?" I ask Meg. Without fully realizing it, I am looking for someone to blame, a local Donald Trump, or at least an evil corporation.

Meg reframes my question: "The harder thing is pulling all the levers at once." Affordable housing requires collaboration from developers, nonprofits, the city, and the county, she explains. "There are a lot of attractive, seemingly logical things, but we don't know the path forward."

The attractive, seemingly logical things include:

- Planning reform that would allow developers to build higher-density complexes if they provide affordable units.
- Transitional housing, funded by L.A.'s November 2016 ballot measure HHH, which provided $1.2 billion for housing, mental health care, and addiction treatment.
- Public education, which Meg sees as the only real way to break the cycle of deep poverty. She has tutored homeless kids, partly to remind herself why she spends her days in long meetings with bureaucrats, builders, and politicians.

Meg also puts some faith in the Coordinated Entry System, a massive, networked, interagency database that will allow any case manager to input a client's data and come up with the best services for them. Call me crazy, but this seems like a better use of tax dollars and big data than, say, a national database of alleged terrorists. A database won't put a roof over anyone's head on its own, but I work at a nonprofit, and just getting our mental health department to use the same software as our education department is a huge fucking

It's equally nutty, if not more so, to clock into a shitty job just so you can pay for a shitty apartment you never have time to do more than sleep in.

ordeal. Whoever said, "The devil is in the details," was probably a database manager.

A Gutterpunk Named Clutter

We won't solve anything without change on the policy front, but people have to take care of themselves in the meantime. The meantime is a vast chasm. The meantime floods when it rains and blisters in the heat. The meantime is hungry.

Oakland artist and metal worker Greg Kloehn gained notoriety for designing mobile "tiny houses" out of castoff materials. His creations are beautiful, practical, and unique. He was inspired by the makeshift shelters he saw on the streets of West Oakland, a gentrifying neighborhood where a tagged-up, abandoned train station recently housed a municipal ball.

"We're always amazed that Eskimos make homes out of snow," he told the *San Jose Mercury News* last year, "and think it's poetic when Amazonian people fashion homes from leaves."

People are artistic and resourceful. In a city, there are shopping carts and wooden crates and broken umbrellas instead of leaves and snow.

On Donald Trump's inauguration weekend, a team of homeless people, neighbors, and activists built a village of tiny homes near Oakland's MacArthur BART station. By early February, police and city workers had dismantled it.

Oakland also made headlines a few months ago when an artists' residence called Ghost Ship caught fire, killing thirty-six people. If you read about the code violations and exploitative practices of the resident manager, you'll appreciate American safety culture. One resident described, to the *Los Angeles Times*, sleeping with a fire extinguisher, seeing "wood with nails sticking out all over the place" and receiving death threats from manager Derick Almena.

I am that mom yelling to her wall-scaling child, "Rules exist for a reason!" The problem is that American cities are in the process of bifurcation. Some live in a world where children are armored in padding before setting foot on a skateboard. Others put buckets beneath leaks because if they complain to the landlord, he might call la migra.

The marriage of homelessness and creativity is no stranger to gutter punks, who eschew traditional employment and the strict rules of shelter life or foster care in favor of riding the rails, panhandling with their pets, and eating Chef Boyardee straight from the can. My friend Lety's son hopped freight trains, called himself Clutter, and had a tattoo of a spider web across his right cheek. He died at twenty-six. I've never known the full story, but I know that making the best of a situation isn't the same as choosing it.

Lety's Facebook page is full of photos of Clutter: with dogs, with signs saying "Beer is cheaper than therapy," giving the camera his tattooed middle finger. After he died, Lety tattooed a train on her forearm in his honor. His baby pictures look like my own train-loving toddler.

Home is the place you feel safest. Some people find comfort in having no rent, no roof, no obligations. I don't want to pathologize nonconformists; it's equally nutty, if not more so, to clock into a shitty job just so you can pay for a shitty apartment you never have time to do more than sleep in. But, well, what if therapy were as cheap as beer? What if people got what they needed and could make real choices instead of rock-vs.-hard-place ones?

Unintentional Communities

Meg Barclay and my partner, C.C., along with a handful of other left-leaning, twenty-something Christians, were part of an "intentional community" in the late nineties. The concept fell somewhere between a commune and a close-knit neighborhood from a bygone era, one in which pots of chili were bartered for yard work or babysitting.

They set up camp in Lincoln Heights, "L.A.'s first suburb," a neighborhood of dilapidated Victorian-era cottages and blocky 1960s apartment complexes. They shared resources and served on the neighborhood council. One of the women ran into C.C. outside their building one morning and said, "*You* were out awfully late last night." Soon C.C. started craving more urban anonymity.

I find myself in a van with one of these neighbors, Barbra, on a foggy evening in late January, when I volunteer for the city's annual homeless count.

At W.O.R.K.S., an affordable housing organization in Highland Park, we watch two training videos. The process is pretty simple: If you see a person who looks homeless, a car or camper that's being used as a home, or a boxes-and-shopping-carts-type shelter, put a tally mark on a clipboard. Every group will have a driver, a navigator, a tally keeper, and counters.

Our driver's name is Erik, and he's a civil engineer with the county parks system. He has participated in counts in other neighborhoods earlier in the week, and it becomes clear that he sees himself as an expert. He says "vehicle" instead of "car." When we debate whether a given person is homeless or just kicking it on the sidewalk outside CVS, he announces "Remember, this is a *visual count*. We have to make our best guess." Later he shortens this to a mantra: "When in doubt, count."

The four tracts we cover comprise my commute to work, exactly: from Highland Park through Lincoln Heights, culminating in Chinatown. We weave through neighborhoods at a creeper's pace (nothing suspicious about a big white van inching down the street at five miles per hour), talking, swinging flashlights into parked cars and snacking on Chinese New Year candies that resemble miniature empanadas.

Almost immediately we see a guy sitting cross-legged beneath a lamppost near a gas station, smoking and making funny gestures with his hands. There's an I-caught-a-fish feeling to the endeavor. There are a few others like him throughout the night, but what becomes

Homelessness in California

In California, the state with the country's third highest "housing wage," you'll need to earn $28.59 an hour to afford a two-bedroom unit. If you earn minimum wage, you'll need to work 114 hours a week for that apartment you'll have no time to sleep in (source: NLIHC.org).

Los Angeles is rent-stabilized, but not rent-controlled. Every time you move, you're at the mercy of market rates. The less stable your life is–the more you switch jobs, change relationships, et cetera–the higher your rent is likely to be.

The city of Los Angeles has 27,000 homeless people and only 2,000 shelter beds; hence a push for public storage facilities and other small gestures that "make it less horrible and dehumanizing to be homeless," as Meg puts it.

Public housing is virtually dead. The Department of Housing and Urban Development has no money for repairs. But while the federal government may be a slumlord, shitty housing is arguably better than no housing. The Jordan Downs complex in Watts (famous for its high rate of crime and drug use) is in the process of being privatized and remodeled as a mixed-use complex with fewer low-income housing units.

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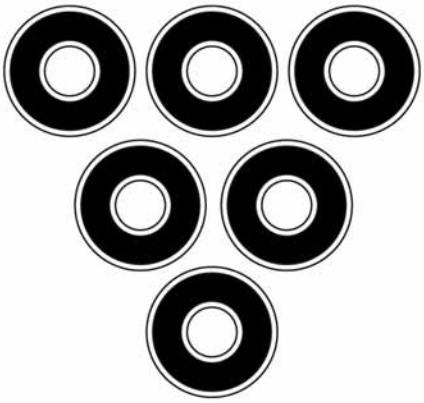

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immediately, painfully obvious as we make our way down residential streets is this: a hell of a lot of people are living in cars (3,900 in the city and 7,000 in the county, according to Meg).

It's not just the old, putty-spackled motor homes, which stand out like turtles in a city of rabbits. It's mini vans with curtains hung in back windows. Sedans with tilted seats waiting for sleepers. Hatchbacks packed with junk. It seems there are one or two on every block.

I point out a car heaped with bedding; Barbra starts to add a tally mark, but someone else observes that we're in the parking lot of a Laundromat. Our work is not an exact science.

Barbra points out a pale yellow building with an arched entryway. "It used to be a crematorium, but it was remodeled into expensive lofts."

American Dreaming

Edie (not her real name) is a poet who used to intern at the nonprofit where I worked. She writes searing, delicate poems about spirituality and birds. She told me this:

When I was a grad student in New York, my mom, her new husband, and my youngest sister—newly out of college—all lived together in an apartment in Garden Grove (a Southern California suburb). My mom's new husband—a newish immigrant—decided to open a martial arts studio, so the family rented a storefront in another part of Orange County and moved out of the apartment. During the first year of getting the martial arts studio together and finding clients, they lived illegally on the floor of the studio and slept in sleeping bags. My mom had a full-time corporate job. My mom's husband constructed an office behind the back wall of the martial arts studio, so they wouldn't get caught in the open studio space. For showers, they went to a 24-Hour Fitness nearby. Eventually, my other sister quit law school in Pennsylvania and moved back to California to help the family financially. She chose to live in the same space with them to save money while she worked at a full-time corporate job. Eventually, she saved enough money to put a down payment on a mobile home for them and to make their payments.

I replied that it sounded like an incredibly difficult time, and Edie said, "I think it was more tough for me and my middle sister watching from afar than it was for the actual family living in the martial arts studio. My mom has a magical ability to find joy in hardship."

What is poetry, I said, if not the magical ability to find joy in hardship? It doesn't make hardship less hard, but it reminds us that joy does not belong exclusively to the rich.

Tragedy and Statistics

I work for a nonprofit that helps people get back on their feet after leaving gangs or prison. Laura (another changed name) didn't gangbang or have a record, but she came from the neighborhood and she hung around because we didn't turn anyone away.

It was Friday, and she was camped out at the desk at the top of the stairs, writing her name over and over on the back of an official-looking form. I'd had a few short conversations with her, including one about placing her baby for adoption, close to year ago. But she'd miscarried and I hadn't seen her until a few days ago, when she'd popped up looking for job and housing leads. I'd pointed her toward our Employment Services and Case Management departments. I was just the grant writer.

I was on deadline, so I tried to avoid her for a while. But I had to use the copy machine a few feet from her desk, so I took a deep breath and said "hi."

"Do you know what this is?" She pointed to a question on the form, as if I were her case manager.

From the little I knew of Laura, she seemed to have muddy boundaries. She might tell you her life story just because you made eye contact. She jumped from subject to subject and her narrative never quite tracked. Maybe there was some kind of diagnosable reason she reached out to me with so little prompting. But I also thought of what Sharon said about always being on the lookout for the person who might help you get off the hamster wheel of homelessness.

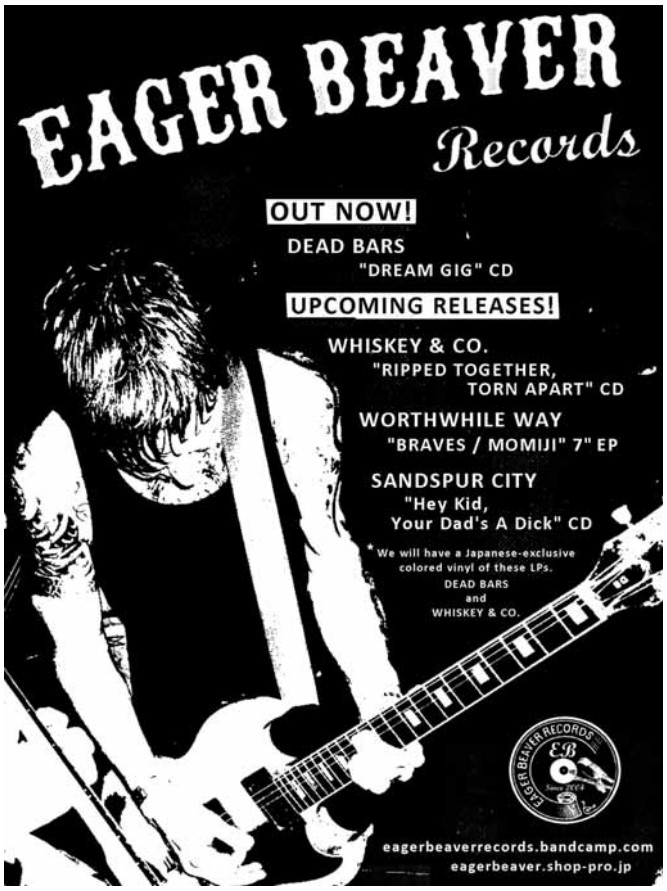
"I been paying this girl to let me sleep in her kitchen," Laura said. "And it's not my own place, but at least it's warm and I can use the shower. But then on Monday, this guy who's also staying there raped me and this little girl, so I ain't staying there no more."

Her words came tumbling out in the same casual, slightly exhausted tone she always used.

"He had scissors and he said he'd stab me with them if I didn't open my legs. 'Cause I was like this—." She crossed her thighs. "And my boyfriend, he got in a fight with him, but not because of that. It was before that. After the guy raped me, my boyfriend left me. He said I shouldn't have let him do it, but he had scissors."

Her eyes were glassy with tears by then. I said things about how it wasn't her fault and maybe it would be good to talk to someone I flagged down one of the staff therapists, who tried to find room on the schedule but looked a little beleaguered herself.

What I did not do was invite Laura to come stay at my house. I told myself it was because of boundaries, because Laura seemed so unstable, because I was doing my part by writing grants. There



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What is poetry if not the magical ability to find joy in hardship?

are people who would have opened their doors and started inflating the air mattress, but I suppose I'm living proof—despite being a reasonably decent person—that wealth isn't going to be redistributed voluntarily.

A couple of days later, Laura posted on Facebook: *Theres times i wish i could end my life i'm just dealing with so much shit at once.* In the comments, she added: *Is so hard out here, is so cold in my truck there's times i don't eat.*

Two days later, our agency held its annual gala fundraiser, at which program graduates shared their stories of transformation. In our debrief afterward, staff concluded that less would be more at future ceremonies. Someone lamented, it all sounds like the same story,

Joseph Stalin supposedly said, "If only one man dies of hunger, that's a tragedy. If millions die, that's only statistics." The same can be said of tragedies within one life. A rape punctuating the life of a promising college student is a tragedy; rape in the lives of homeless women with ex-gangbanger boyfriends and no job prospects is just Monday.

That is to say, I'm not sure how to end a story that doesn't have an ending; a story that contains too many stories. It's been a rainy winter, and it gets cold at night.

Further reading

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San Jose Mercury News, Mark Hedin, "Oakland tiny homes artist inspired by homeless' creativity" (mercurynews.com/2016/06/09/oakland-tiny-homes-artist-inspired-by-homeless-creativity/)

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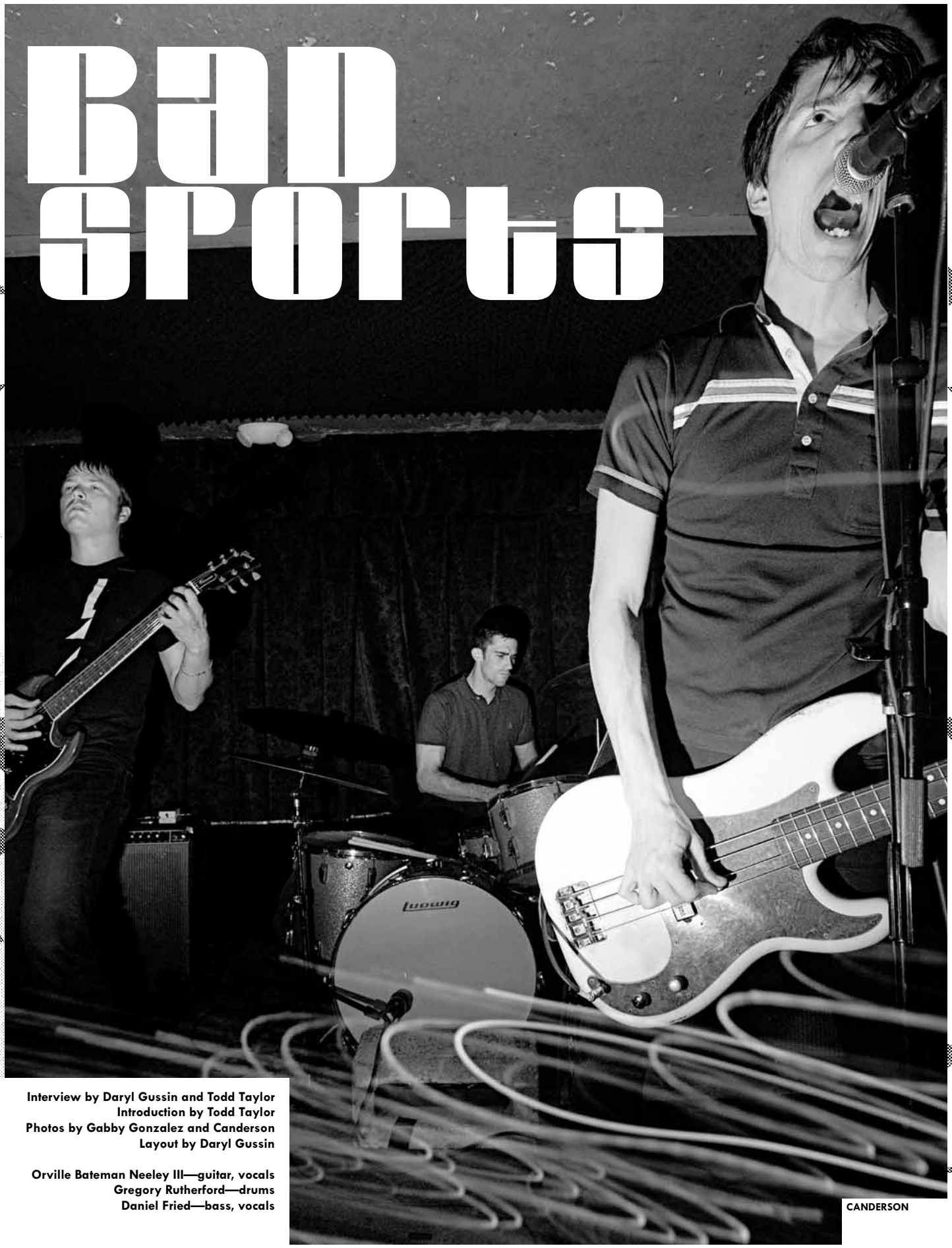
BAD SPORTS



CANDERSON

Interview by Daryl Gussin and Todd Taylor
Introduction by Todd Taylor
Photos by Gabby Gonzalez and Canderson
Layout by Daryl Gussin

Orville Bateman Neeley III—guitar, vocals
Gregory Rutherford—drums
Daniel Fried—bass, vocals

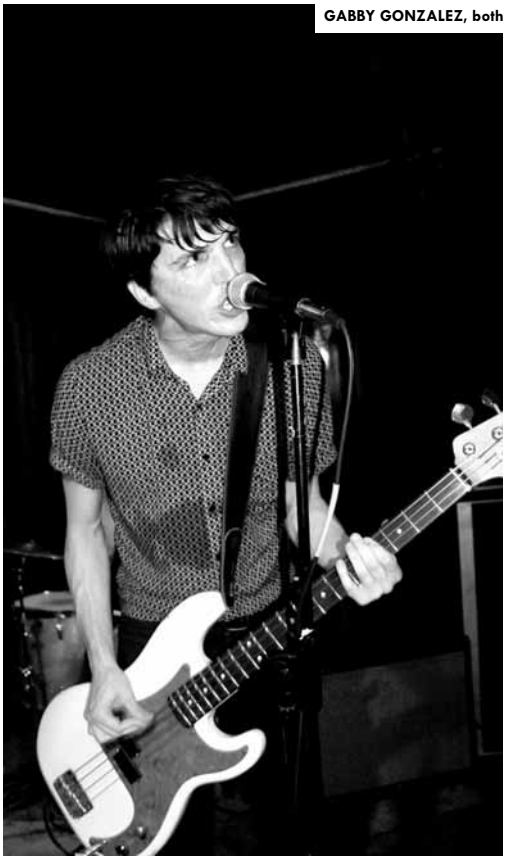
Bad Sports, originally from Denton, Texas, has been around for over a decade. They're a fantastic band, worthy of deep and repeated listens. Their latest, *Living with Secrets*, is one of the best punk records released in the past twelve months. While it's true members of Bad Sports are in Radioactivity, OBN IIIs, and Video, do not make the mistake of thinking they are merely living beneath the shadows of their other bands, stealing from their deli plates in the green room. Bad Sports has its own identity that's rooted in both early punk and rock'n'roll—Ramones bubblegum-wrapped bullets, Van Halen's high-stepping fireworks flair—but the longer they exist, they're filling that high-tension crackle and gymnastic sparkle with a catchy darkness. Their music is becoming more vulnerable and creepy; suffused in twilight weirdness. Then mix that with self-effacing confidence, nascent slam poetry, lottery dreams of running a bed and breakfast, ten years of severe beatings as a band, and 203,000 miles in their tour van the past four years. You come out the other end of the tunnel with expectations calibrated, a friend's bed broken, and a shattered windshield.

When they play live, they're a three-fingered fist; an undeniably tight, tense, vein-bulged statement of purpose.

After this interview ended, we shared quite possibly the best peach we've all ever eaten. Orville learned new ways to make steel cut oatmeal. Gregory disappeared until the show and then re-disappeared until they got back in the van for San Francisco the next morning, and Daniel lamented playing in Japanese pants with special heat technology. *Sweeatttty.*

We're not a jukebox. We're going to play what ever we want.

Daryl: How much property damage would you estimate Grag (Gregory's drunken alter ego) has been responsible for over the years? Dollar-wise?
Orville: Oh, how much did that windshield cost? [laugher]
Gregory: Our pal's old house, I pretty much destroyed. Front door, bed, speakers. How much does a front door cost? A hundred bucks?
Orville: Well, there's also the labor involved.
Gregory: I fixed his bed, but I didn't fix it very good.
Daryl: What did you do to the bed?
Gregory: I don't remember how old we were—maybe like twenty-four or something.
Daniel: We were way older than that. [laugher]
Gregory: All right, it was a couple years ago. And we were having a party... kinda... we were just hanging out. And somebody put on Cock Sparrer, and he had a little trampoline in his room and we put it on the bed because we thought it would get crazy good bounce.
Todd: Did it?
Gregory: One bounce was really good, and then the come down was the problem because I snapped the side frame of his bed. I felt really bad 'cause the next day I went into his room and he was sleeping on a slanted bed. [laughter] And it just looked so sad. Then I fixed it a year later.
Orville: The ceiling wasn't a problem? You didn't hit your head on the ceiling?
Gregory: Honestly, I don't know. I might have. But there was this other time when he wouldn't let me in his house—or at least, I thought he wasn't letting me in his house. This was the same night, actually. I tried to butt my shoulder through the door. But it actually worked and I was like, "Oh shit! I just broke his door." And I felt really bad and tried to run away. [laughter] And he caught me. I looked back and he was standing in the doorway, shaking his head. To answer the question, around $1,000.
Daniel: There was also the time you smashed the windshield while singing "We Are the Champions," punching the windshield.
Orville: Weren't you upside down in the seat while you were doing that?
Daniel: No, he was regular ways.
Gregory: I replaced that windshield with all the money I made on tour. Two hundred dollars.
Daniel: He smashed the windshield and it just spidered.
Gregory: It wasn't an angry smash. I actually thought "We Are the Champions" was playing, but, apparently, I was just singing it.
Daniel: Orville wasn't with us but we had rented the van from his friend. Immediately afterwards Gregory goes, "Can we just tell Orville we hit a rock?" [laughter]
Orville: Hit a rock? And it was in the top right inside corner. I heard you didn't even punch it very hard.
Gregory: I didn't!
Orville: It was just a weak spot.
Daniel: So with Grag, you can't blame Greg, because he's a good guy. But Grag is kind of a nightmare.
Gregory: I've tamed the beast though now that I'm almost thirty.
Daryl: Now Grag does volunteer work?
Gregory: Yeah, I helped an old lady cross the street the other day, but I was fucking hammered! [laughter]
Todd: So no offense, but Bad Sports isn't the greatest name.
Orville: Oh yeah, I came up with that. Well, it's better than what we almost had.
Todd: Which was what?
Orville: It was right before Greg joined. We were at a house show somewhere and we were thinking about a band name. Daniel suggested Bad Trash, and it was just two negative words. I thought about it for a minute and said, "How about Bad Sports?" And it was a pretty quick decision. I was surprised it hadn't been taken.
Daniel: There are a million other things called that now. A restaurant, a clothing line, a TV show, everything.
Gregory: It's what cheaters in the video game Grand Theft Auto are called.
Daniel: You can't Google us anymore.
Daryl: Isn't the actual term "poor sport?"
Daniel: No, not necessarily, especially not in East Texas where we have really bad grammar.
Todd: It's a regional colloquialism?
Orville: I don't know. It's pretty common.
Todd: Slang?
Daniel: I guess so.
Orville: You say it's not a great band name, which is fine or whatever…
Todd: In all fairness, Razorcake is not a great name either.
Gregory: Names are hard.
Orville: We have friends who are in a band called US Weekly. That's just theft.
Daniel: You just called them out. They're gonna get sued.



GABBY GONZALEZ, both

Todd: There's the band Prince.
Orville: Oh yeah, I recorded them.
Daryl: Yeah but they're trying to get sued. [laughter]
Orville: But getting back to our band name, what do you expect?
Daniel: How old were we when we came up with the name?
Orville: I was twenty-one.
Daniel: It seemed cool at the time.
Todd: At least you're not just called Sports.
Daniel: That would be the thing to do now.
Orville: With no O. SPRTS.
Daniel: No, that was like three years ago.
Gregory: Maybe we should change our name.
Orville: No, we've been a band for almost ten years.
Gregory: We've got to rejuvenate the brand.
Todd: The Googling of "Bad Sports Bras" (*Bras* is the title of their third LP): not great for you.
Daniel: That was by design. [laughter]
Todd: How long have you been a band?
Daniel: Ten years in October.
Todd: Sometimes things have a lot more legs than you think.
Orville: It's a little late. We might as well start a different band if we're going to change the name.
Todd: Which brings us to another question. Why Bad Sports when you guys are in so many other bands? And right now I'm talking to 3/4s of Radioactivity. What does Bad Sports fill in your life that the other projects don't?
Daniel: It's just the difference of songwriting. Jeff (Burke) writes all the Radioactivity songs. He won't let us do any of that. [laughter] But with this it's the stuff that Orville or I write, or we write together.
Orville: I think Jeff did invite us to start writing songs for him yesterday.
Daniel: I think that was a joke. [laughter]
Orville: Oh, his sarcasm is extremely dry.
Daniel: As far as I think of it, this is our pop band. Video is a lot harsher. Bad Sports is where we try to write the pop songs. Or at least I do.
Gregory: For me, it's just that we've been doing it for so long. We can't stop now.
Daryl: So you're just never going to stop?
Gregory: I can't. I think about it sometimes and I get so many weird feelings.
Daniel: What else are we going to do? We have nothing else.
Daryl: I get a sense with Video and OBN IIIs, that there's this sense of moving up into another level of success playing music, but Bad Sports seems very comfortable with what it is. Is this intentional?
Orville: Well...
Daniel: Well…
Gregory: Well…
Orville: There've been a lot of changes. Looking back and reflecting on where we started and the first record—all that earlier stuff, I can do without, and there's some decent stuff in there—but we had to go through that to be where we are now. As for the other bands, I don't know. With this band, I have these guys to reign me in. With OBN IIIs, whatever I say goes. Which is what Video is for Daniel.
Daniel: This was the first band that we ever had that had any actual sort of success.
Orville: Or interest.
Daniel: Yeah, it's like, we get flown in to do certain shows, and we have songs on TV. But Video has never had that. Even though there's ambition as far as that is concerned. Because we're trying to write pop songs, there's a wheelhouse that you can sit in, but we can play around within that. If we're going to write a three- or four-minute song, it's going to be pretty structured.
Orville: I think you're giving away a little too much.
Daniel: Sorry.
Daryl: I feel like there are some departure tracks on this newest record (*Living with Secrets*). Just like, "Oh, there aren't any other Bad Sports songs that sound like that."
Orville: That's true.
Daniel: Wait till you hear the next record.
Gregory: It's a rap album. [laughter]
Orville: Well, it's just a different term for burrito.
Todd: I have a couple questions off of that. What did you have to work through to get to where you are now? I think as developing artists, you're starting out. You have elements you really like and you incorporate them over time while other things you discard. It's like being in a relationship that a lot of people get to experience.
Orville: That's pretty much all material I've written. I'll be all about it for a good while, and once it's released and I start writing new stuff, I could care less about the older stuff. Though I still like to play it. There's a lot of material that we have that we refuse to play.
Daniel: If you come see us now, we're not playing songs off the first or second album. We're not a jukebox. We're going to play whatever we want.
Orville: After resting a couple songs, we brought back some old ones that people always ask to hear. Maybe you'll hear them tonight?
Daniel: Maybe.
Orville: I'm not making any promises.
Todd: What songs did you get on television?
Daniel: It's a couple songs off the second album, *Kings of the Weekend*, that got on ABC's *Revenge* or something like that.
Gregory: The American version of *Shameless*. We were in Gran Turismo 6.
Daniel: *Laggies*. The Keira Knightley movie. And they misspelled Orville's name in the credits and it's really funny to me.
Orville: What? I didn't know about this movie.
Daniel: I watched the whole movie 'cause I knew there was supposed to be a song in there. I could not actually tell if it was, but we are credited in it.
Orville: What is *Laggies*?
Daniel: It's Keira Knightley and, uh, what's that girl's name? She was in *Kick-Ass*.
Orville: What song is it supposed to be? [laughter]
Daniel: I don't know.

WHERE WOULD YOU SAY YOUR CONFIDENCE COMES FROM?

IN THE LAST TEN YEARS I'VE HAD IT ALL BEATEN OUT OF ME.

Todd: So how does that happen? How do you have the wherewithal to have songs in movies and video games?
Daniel: We have people. [laughter]
Orville: A friend of ours offered us a deal for songwriting publishing. People ask me about how they can get it, and I just don't know. I was lucky. They offered it to me. Anything that's come from that has been really awesome, and I feel really grateful for it. And if we didn't have that, I don't know where we'd be right now. Honestly.
Daniel: Yeah.
Gregory: I would have quit. [laughter] "If we don't get a song on TV in the next year, I'm quitting."
Todd: "Fuck you Grag!" [laughter]
Daniel: I wouldn't have a car.
Orville: Yeah, he wouldn't have a van that's now on its last leg.
Daryl: That's after how many miles?
Orville: Lots!
Daniel: 219,000 at the moment.
Orville: How many did it have when you got it?
Daniel: 16,000.
Todd: Wow!
Daniel: That was all in four years.
Daryl: This is kind of along the same lines. What's the first thing you think of when you hear the phrase "music business?"
Gregory: Rod Stewart. [laughter] In a suit.
Orville: I see a vague cloud, like a cartoon fight. There's a cloud and a bunch of fists and feet and garbage coming out of it. And then occasionally someone pretty and somebody ugly, and then a guitar string pops, [laughs]. Lots of cacophony, fart noises.
Daryl: I wanna think that this could just go on all day.
Daniel: Oh, it could.
Orville: They have to sit in the van with me and deal with it. And not just the fart noises, but everything that goes along with that.
Gregory: It's really vague to me, because I don't pay attention. But when I tell people that I play music or that I'm in bands, I know they wouldn't have heard of any of it. It's small time. But I'm like, "Oh wait, I have a song on a TV show, so maybe you've seen that TV show?" And that's something I can anchor this to. But I don't understand the music business.
Daniel: We have little bragging rights.
Orville: Very little.
Gregory: I think of that scene in *Decline of Western Civilization II*, where that old guy is going "Odin! Odin!" And no one has ever heard of Odin to this day. And that dude in his assless chaps.
Todd: With suspenders, in the jacuzzi.
Gregory: Yes! That's the music business.
Orville: What's that guy's name—who chugged the bottle of vodka in the pool? He's still making music. He lives in Norway. I've seen one of his music videos. Chris Holmes. That's who we're thinking of. It sounds like a '80s Motörhead album. That kind of production, but made in 2015. And the video is just him walking around in Oslo getting ice cream, then being at home and petting his dog, and then eating a plate of sausages and drinking coffee.
Gregory: Isn't the song called "I Love to Rock" or something?
Orville: He's just walking around town doing touristy stuff. Then he's playing in a small club and the motorcycles come in with the backlighting and smoke. It's like an '80s hair metal music video. They really kept that part. Except that there are no women in the video at all.
Gregory: "Let It Roar"
Orville: Yeah, that's the name.
Daniel: This is the kind of stuff we listen to on the reg in the van.
Gregory: Man, we got totally derailed. [laughter]
Orville: Sorry about that.
Daryl: Where would you say your confidence comes from?
Daniel: What?
Orville: Is that how you perceive us?
Daryl: Yeah. [laughs]
Orville: In the last ten years I've had it all beaten out of me.
Daniel: Yeah, failure after failure.
Orville: Actually, now with lower expectations than ever, I'm confident that I'm just gonna get out there and do the thing. And if no one likes it, I'll be in the same place I was when I started. It'll be fine.
Gregory: I still get incredibly nervous all the time when playing music. Recording, playing live, practicing. Sometimes it's not there, but I'm a nervous wreck before and during.
Orville: Not nervous enough to puke though, which I appreciate.
Gregory: I can control the nervousness—and I don't think I look nervous, because I have a flat affectation. But in my head is a hurricane of stress. Some times I black out a little bit while I'm playing. I keep playing, but I'll phase back in and wonder where we are. But I'm glad I seem confident. [laughs] That's awesome.
Todd: Do all three of you have degrees?
Gregory: I got a black belt degree. [laughter]
Daniel: Naw, Orville is the only one with a degree. I went to school for seven years, but didn't graduate, so I should pretty much be a doctor.
Orville: We all have seven degrees of Kevin Bacon. [laughter]
Todd: Daniel, didn't you get a degree in rehabilitation?
Daniel: No. Mark Ryan did.
Gregory: I almost have a degree in behavior analysis but I never got it. I'm trying to go back to school though because I don't want to move furniture for the rest of my life. Colleges, if you're reading this: give me a degree.
Todd: Orville, what was your degree in?
Orville: I got a degree in radio, TV, and film. But I don't work in that industry because if I did I wouldn't be able to play in bands. You're on for two weeks with sixteen-hour days and you get no time to do anything. Just having a nine-to-five job fucks me up enough as it is. Having other things, friends—you know, doing stuff that's not music—everything fucks that up. I couldn't do film work 'cause it's too taxing. Pays well, though.
Gregory: So now you know, two out of three of us are a bunch of dumb dumbs who never graduated college. [laughter]
Todd: So what is behavior analysis?
Orville: Let's just break it down, you have behavior, anal, and ISIS. Greg?
Gregory: Uhhh, I can't follow that. [laughter] I was majoring in applied behavior analysis

CANDERSON

I don't look nervous, but in my head is a hurricane of stress.

therapy. It had a lot of applications, it's like three or four techniques that you use in a lot of situations, but what my concentration was in was people who can't communicate verbally. It's basically a type of therapy to help people communicate who can't talk. That's what I was studying. And I was really close to finishing my degree, but we were offered to tour in Europe. I had to go do that and put my degree on hold. The problem is that it's only offered at a few schools in the United States, so if I wanted to finish my degree I'd have to move somewhere and that's just a big leap, I guess. Man, I hope no one who does ABA therapy reads this 'cause they're just gonna be like, "I'm pretty sure he's wrong." [laughter]

Daryl: What's something you have actively done to distance yourselves from the Marked Men? Do you ever get tired of the comparisons?

Gregory: No, that's the best band ever.

Daniel: We don't get compared to them that often.

Orville: It's been a few years since we've gotten that.

Daniel: I think our styles are pretty different.

Gregory: It would be cool if we sounded like the Marked Men!

Daniel: But we don't.

Orville: It would also be uncool to sound like them, 'cause we would just be copycats.

Daniel: I guess we're more rock'n'roll sounding than the Marked Men. We have more swing or something.

Gregory: Mark would whoop us if we tried to rip him off. You don't fuck with Mark's money. [laughter]

Orville: He would just whoop us with his stare.

Todd: This is a more obscure question. How do you keep notes?

Daniel: Phones basically. If you come up with a riff, record a voice memo and come back to it later. Or write it down in the "notes." It's always with me.

Gregory: That's how Orville remembers all of his slam poetry. [laughter]

Orville: I just started doing slam poetry... today.

Daryl: Do you want to give us a taste?

Orville: No.

Daryl: He's a genius.

Daniel: It's so anti-establishment.

Orville: Actually, you're living through it every moment you're around me. I don't have a work/life separation. It's all life, *baby*. That's what they say in the music biz right, *baby*? [laughter]

Daryl: All right, so you're a teacher at a high school. What class and grade do you teach?

Gregory: Gym! [laughter]

Orville: Yeah, I mean, just look at him.

Gregory: I mean all of us. We're all the coach.

Orville: Would you be the coach who would be like, "Step aside. Let me show you how to climb a rope."

Gregory: No, I'd be an understanding gym coach, but we wouldn't get anything accomplished. You know—all the things you're supposed to accomplish in gym.

Orville: You wouldn't be the hard-ass coach?

Gregory: No, I want all the kids to like me because I have low self-esteem. [laughter]

Daniel: I just wanna do the School of Rock stuff. You know, telling them to drop their guitars a little lower so they can learn how to rock. Then they'll grow up to be way more successful than me and I'll hold a grudge.

Orville: I think I would want to be in an administrative position rather than a teacher. [laughs] I would be like that show *Vice Principals*. Or I'd probably be the janitor.

Daniel: The janitor with a heart of gold.

Orville: I'd be that guy who gets asked, "You want some of this milk, sideburns?" [laughter] "I'd rather have a beer."

Gregory: The kids don't understand what you're talking about. They throw a fidget spinner at you.

Daniel: When this comes out, fidget spinners aren't even going to be around anymore.

Daryl: How do you like touring, playing in two bands a night? Does it feel sustainable, or do you feel like you're going to crash?

Gregory: It's awesome.

Orville: It's sustainable like solar.

Daniel: We like it because you drive for eight hours and if you're just in one band, you play for twenty or thirty minutes and that sucks. What's the point of that? Now we at least get to play for an hour.

Orville: Double the attention. [laughter]

Gregory: Yeah, people are looking at us at one point, and then we play again and they're looking at us again. It's awesome.

Daniel: If you weren't paying attention to us before, you're gonna do it now.

Daryl: When I saw you guys were doing it I thought, "Wow, do they get twice as many drink tickets?"

Orville: No, we get stiffed on that end all the time.

Daniel: Whenever I tell people that I'm playing in two bands on tour they're like, "You get paid twice?" Noooo.

Gregory: It is fun, though. It is really rewarding getting to play two sets.

Daniel: We used to do this with Nobunny, too. We're a great backing band. If anyone is reading this and needs a backing band, call Bad Sports.

Gregory: We're cheap!

Orville: Don't tell them we're cheap. We're really expensive, but we'll make you a deal.

Gregory: You get a break, which is nice. It's like playing a soccer game when you were a kid. Middle of the game, you break, get a Capri Sun and an orange slice, and you get back out there.

[laughter]

Gregory: We need Capri Suns and orange slices.

Daniel: I agree.

Todd: In a perfect world, how would you support yourself?

Daniel: I would win the lottery.

[laughter]

Gregory: I do like working. I like having a task to do. I would like to own a bed and breakfast. And I'm the manager. But the only people who stay there are people who I know and we just have a nice time and I make them tea and we hang out. I like hosting. And I get to play drums as much as I want, and no one can complain about how loud it is. And I'm a lot better at drums in this world.

Orville: I guess I would like to be a lot better at stuff that I do.

Gregory: And get paid.

[laughter]

Orville: And despite what some people think, I would be more confident. But not an asshole.

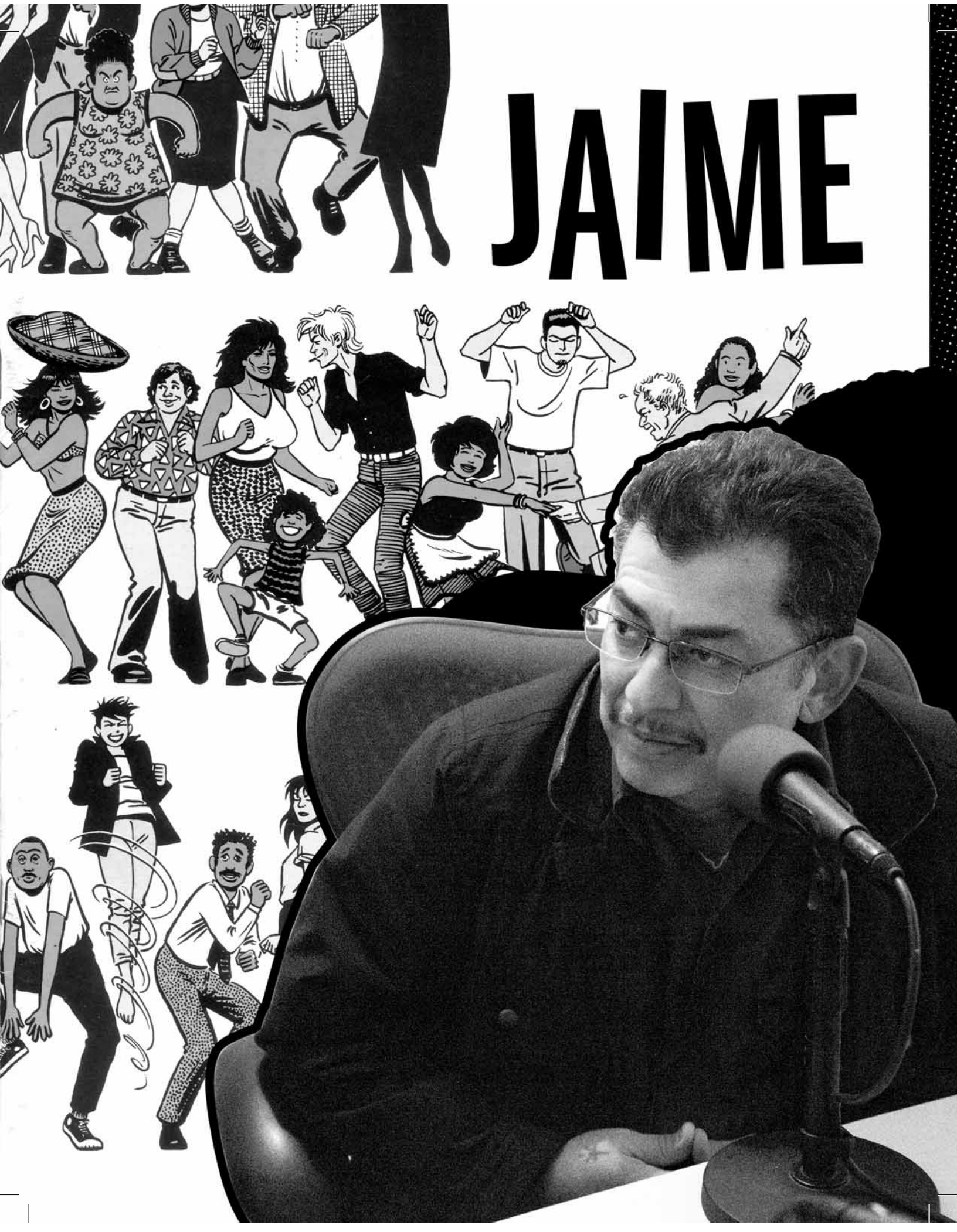
Gregory: Oh yeah, I would love to stop being an asshole.

Daniel: I'm actually ramping that up in my fantasy.

Orville: Also my jokes would always land. [silence and then laughter]

Gregory: I also want that.

Orville: Not just land, but kill!


JAIME

HERNANDEZ

This is life, man—whether we like it or not. I don't make things up because I'd have to answer for that.

Jaime Hernandez is more than a mere comic book writer or illustrator. He is part of La Familia Hernandez—Jaime (Xaime), Mario, and Gilbert (Beto)—a group of brothers who created the expansive world of *Love and Rockets* in 1981. It intertwines three separate narratives, one from each brother, across multiple locations within a creative universe still active today.

I was about fifteen when I picked up my first collection of *Love and Rockets* while working at a comic book store. A dumb, old customer dude gave me a copy and said, "You need this." I was surprised. He wasn't just being a creepy dude trying to hit on me. The book was instantly relatable.

It was the first comic book I'd read to address women being queer and gender fluidity. It was full of people of color. It was populated with women being smart about their sexuality, of women often using their sexuality to get what they want. Women in other comics were most often one-dimensional objects of desire, but Jaime treated women... as women. Who they are as individuals matters. They're as diverse as school teachers, strippers, punk musicians, and luchadoras. And he depicts without judgment.

Although each one of the brother's individual works brings something uniquely different to the table of *Love and Rockets*, it's how Jaime captures the soul and spirit of each one of his characters—while showing the beauty of each—that never stops amazing me, often leaving me dead in my tracks.

In the following interview, we only focused on a few of Jaime's *Love and Rockets* cast of characters. Maggie does it all. She starts as a mechanic and shows us everything she's made of with every issue. Hopey is Maggie's best friend and is the more in your-face-character of the duo. They go on endless adventures. (I see myself as a mix between Maggie and Hopey.) Ray is the quiet male equal to Maggie. He's attractive and set in his own way. Nothing ever gets to him. Speedy—my self-proclaimed man in the series—makes his appearance as the best-looking cholo in Barrio Hoppers. Frogmouth is everything wrong in a person packed in a beautiful female form, which allows her to do as she pleases.

We laughed throughout this interview as Jaime, who was open and warm, talked about how he got into comics; creating his characters; and how dinosaurs, cholos, and punks can be worked into a single storyline.

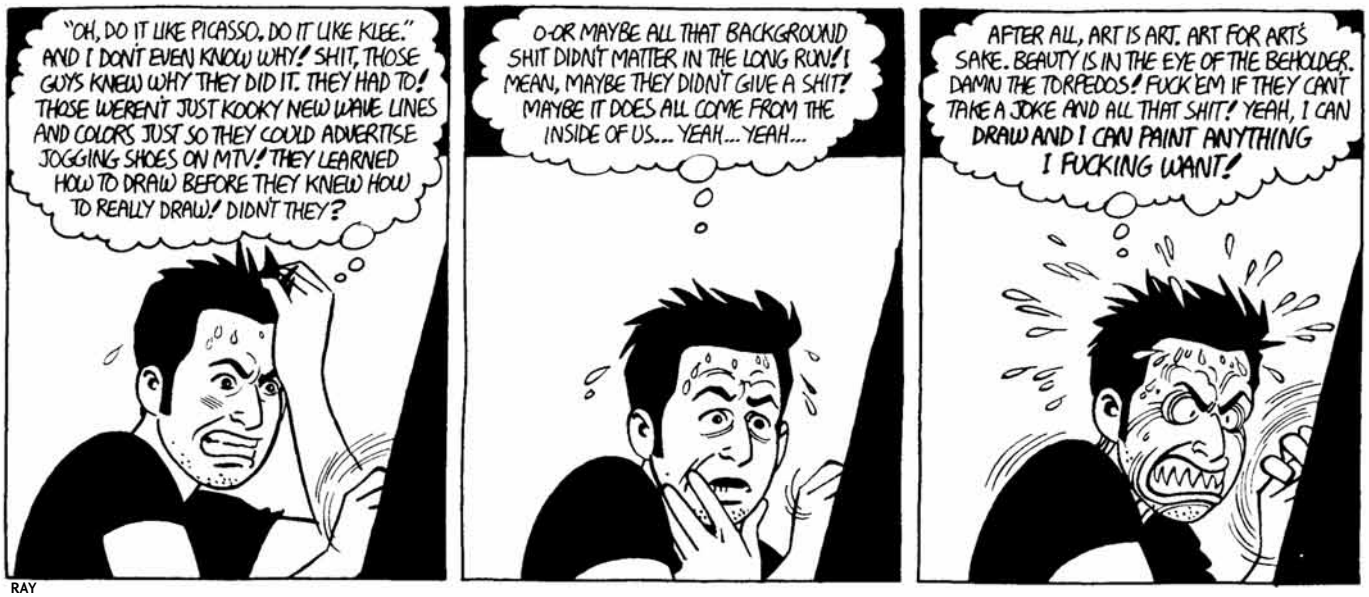
INTERVIEW by Ever Velasquez, Becky Rodriquez, and Todd Taylor

PHOTOS by Amina Cruz

TRANSCRIPTION by Becky Rodriquez

INTRODUCTION by Ever Velasquez

LAYOUT by Eric Baskauskas


"OH, DO IT LIKE PICASSO. DO IT LIKE KLEE." AND I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHY! SHIT, THOSE GUYS KNEW WHY THEY DID IT. THEY HAD TO! THOSE WEREN'T JUST KOOKY NEW WAVE LINES AND COLORS JUST SO THEY COULD ADVERTISE JOGGING SHOES ON MTV! THEY LEARNED HOW TO DRAW BEFORE THEY KNEW HOW TO REALLY DRAW! DIDN'T THEY?
O-OR MAYBE ALL THAT BACKGROUND SHIT DIDN'T MATTER IN THE LONG RUN! I MEAN, MAYBE THEY DIDN'T GIVE A SHIT! MAYBE IT DOES ALL COME FROM THE INSIDE OF US... YEAH... YEAH...
AFTER ALL, ART IS ART. ART FOR ART'S SAKE. BEAUTY IS IN THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER. DAMN THE TORPEDOS! FUCK 'EM IF THEY CAN'T TAKE A JOKE AND ALL THAT SHIT! YEAH, I CAN DRAW AND I CAN PAINT ANYTHING I FUCKING WANT!
RAY

Becky: Congratulations on another Eisner nomination. I'm very jazzed for you.
Jaime: Oh yeah! Thank you.
Becky: Let's start this off by saying I love *Love and Rockets* so much! I started reading it in '87 and that's about the time you guys started getting a lot of recognition; a lot of awards started coming in for you.
Jaime: That was a good year.
Becky: Yeah, that was a good year.
[Laughs all around.]
Jaime: I think I did "The Death of Speedy" in that year.
Ever: Oh, no!
Becky: So, when you started getting awards, did that change your approach for you or your brother Gilbert in any way?
Jaime: No, no. It was a good thing but—I hate to sound all conceited and everything—but we knew we had it. We knew what we were doing and awards was just kind of like, "Oh, thanks!" But without the awards we still would have been cocky.
Ever: With every right, though! It's a solid book. You have not lost me in all these years.
[All laugh.]
Jaime: No, but I really appreciate all that recognition and stuff like that.
Ever: For our readers, who may not be familiar with your beginnings, can you tell us what drew you to comics in the first place?
Jaime: I grew up in a house with comics. There were five boys and a girl. We all read comics. As long as I can remember, my brothers were already buying comics, so that was just a normal thing in the house. And we really liked it. My older brother started drawing and so I drew. I'm fourth in line. I just copied what they were doing and I found that I really liked comics. I just liked the language of it. I had the support group with my family and it was just cool. I didn't know that that was for geeks, you know? I thought it was just normal.
Becky: How would you describe the punk scene in Oxnard in the mid-'80s? Who were your favorite bands to go see back in the day?

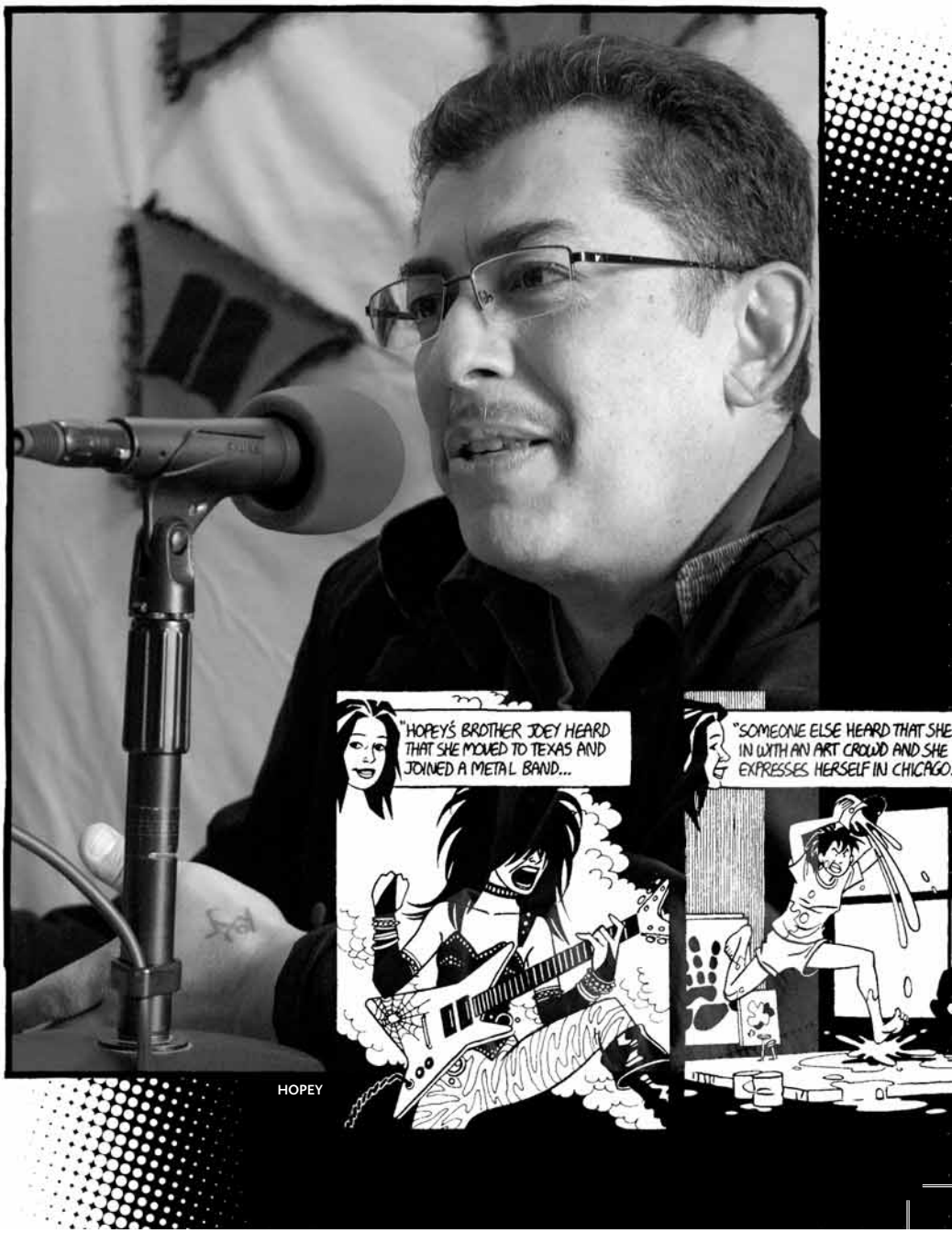
Jaime: Oh! Let's see. First question first. In Oxnard? Well, our scene kind of blossomed in the early '80s and so I actually knew punks by then. I mean I would come to L.A. in the late '70s and I didn't know anybody. After the show, we would just get back in our car and go back to Oxnard where there were no punks—or, that we knew of.

But yeah, the early 80s—it was cool because we had our own scene after a while—bands and everyone wanted to be in a band. And it didn't seem like a hard thing to do. It was just kind of like, "You learned to play guitar? I want to learn to play guitar!" And the scene kind of took off, but Gilbert and I kind of started to fade out because we started the comic in '81 and got picked up in '82 by a publisher (Fantagraphics). We would be in bands, but we would also be doing a comic and the comic was taking up a lot of our time, while all our friends were already recording and stuff like that. And so Gilbert and I just thought, "Well, we're better at comics than we are in bands." [chuckles] The second question was?
Becky: What were your favorite bands to see?
Jaime: Back in the day? Golly… I first discovered punk through Sex Pistols and records—Elvis Costello, The Clash, and things like that. Buzzcocks and Ramones. It wasn't until Gilbert went with some friends to a show to go see The Jam and the Dickies opened for 'em.
Becky: Oh, nice!
Jaime: He came home and goes, "Jaime, we gotta go to shows. We gotta go." And he talked about The Jam like, "That was a really cool show. They were really good, but The Dickies were so fun." We didn't know what they sounded like. But then I started going with him to shows and seeing local bands that didn't have records, or maybe a single here and there. One of the first bands that I saw was the Cramps because they were opening up for The Runaways. And then eventually just started seeing bands like X, Black Flag, The Go-Go's even. The Bags, the Plugz, all that L.A. gang in the late '70s. It was just a lot of fun.

We would go whenever someone had a car and we could afford gas. Stuff like that. We were lucky to go at least once a week or maybe once a month to see shows. It was kind of liberating. Like, this is cool and none of these bands have records. I'm actually part of this local scene that I didn't read about in *Creem* magazine or whatever.
Ever: Your comics are very inclusive in the universe of *Love and Rockets*. Are the stories a reflection of your own social circle or what you would want to see?
Jaime: Hmm, I never really thought of that. I just put what I know, you know? And what people I meet. It's just what interests me in the world. That's hard to answer.
Ever: For me, the way that you make your comics, it seemed like the universe around me, like growing up in Los Angeles.
Jaime: Right, right. Sure, I tried to create the world—Southern California that people didn't know. That most of the world didn't know about at the time. I came from low rider culture before punk, so there was all this Southern California in me. When we started doing the comic, Maggie was a rocket mechanic but I go, "Yeah, but she lives down the street, you know, in those apartments." I kind of pictured that. And then I created Hoppers based on my neighborhood in Oxnard. It's like when you're reading comic books but your real life is more interesting? [laughs all around] When you discover that, you go, "Why don't I do comics about this? This is more interesting to me." As much as I like drawing dinosaurs, it's not as personal. [More agreeing laughs]
Becky: So, I got to see your brother Ismael's band when he played with Know, which was really fun. Do you still go see shows?
Jaime: Every once in a while Ismael will call me and go, "Hey we're playing in Pasadena this weekend." And I go, "Which band?" Cause, he's always playing bass for this guy, and then these guys. He just jumps around. So

it's rare now. I don't have that energy to be in a room with flying elbows. [All laughs] And not being able to see over people because I'm short. [More laughing]
Becky: I know that feeling.
Ever: Yeah.
Jaime: I knew that I got old when I would go to shows and I would look up at the balcony. I would see people sitting in chairs and I go, "Why don't we get to sit up there? [All laughs]
Becky: I got to see the Mummies a couple of years back but I am really short. Everybody in front of me was tall and I kept hopping up to try to see. I was so disappointed. I missed so much.
Ever: That last Mummies show at that bowling alley, I was like, "Nope! I'm getting up front somehow." People were trying to like push me out of the way. I was taking all these pictures. "I'm staying here!" Since she mentioned Dr. Know, can you tell us the story about that famous drawing you drew?
Jaime: I guess that goes back to when it became cool to draw your flyers because the Black Flag, Raymond Pettibon thing took off. I remember liking those, 'cause I go, "Wow, comics on punk flyers!" It was like, "Why just print letters on it when you can draw 'em?" Gilbert and I were the artists so they were always coming to us to draw their flyers.

Then everyone got into this thing of "our symbol." "We need our symbol for our band." And I remember the guitar player just asked, "Can you draw me a cool chick holding the symbol with these long nails and big hair, and she's all like a monster?" and I go, "That's kind of heavy metal isn't it?" [laughs all around] But I go, "Sure, why not?" I wasn't doing anything. And then the other band Ill Repute, they go, "Draw a dead corpse hanging from a noose." And I'm going, "You guys are more metal than punk." [laughs]
Todd: "You guys need a better art department."
Jaime: So, it was fun.
Todd: What did you get paid for that?
Jaime: Sometimes nothing. Sometimes I couldn't even get a T-shirt out of them.
All: Nooo!
Todd: Since you mentioned it, when you say "the symbol," are you talking about the diamond with the X through it?
Jaime: Yeah, that came about 'cause that whole Nardcore thing. I was at a party, bored with my brother Ismael and other friends. We were kind of making fun of the new hardcore kind of thing of every band's got a symbol, they got their letters and so my brother Ismael goes, "We're not hardcore, we're Nardcore!" [laughs all around] And we're all just cracking up, laughing.
Becky: That's where that whole thing came from then, huh?
Jaime: Yeah, yeah. It was at this party. And so I thought "Oxnard." When I was little, we used to draw an "O" with a cross through it and "n a r d," so Oxnard. And I just simplified it by…
Todd: Took the "nard" out.
Jaime: Yeah, and then made the diamond. I thought someone else made it a diamond, but my brother says I did.
Todd: Take credit.
[Everyone agreeing.]
Jaime: So that's where that diamond and the x—it's really an O and an X. And it all started at that boring party. And it was at an upper middle class house, and I'm like, "What the hell are we doing here?"
Ever: We've heard in previous interviews that the character you most identify with is Ray Dominguez. Has that changed over time or is that something that changes often?
Jaime: It started out where I created Ray just 'cause I needed a male Maggie—because every thought I had was going into Maggie. Then I go, "Well, she's not allowed in the men's bathroom or the men's locker room. I need somebody who can go where guys go." And so, I thought, well, I'll have a male Maggie. I'll have someone who has all my thoughts and so I split Ray and Maggie. They're both me, in the beginning. After a while, they took on a life of their own, and I realized they're not me at all. The decisions they're making are not my decisions anymore. And I thought that was cool, that they grew into their own characters. So yeah, after a while, they're just them. They don't even agree with me sometimes.
Becky: So, when you were first starting out, how did you describe the need to create art in the face of people who ask, "How are you going to make a living at that?"
Jaime: That I was supposed to make something of myself?
Becky: Yeah.
Jaime: Mom was just happy we found something to do. I swear, it's that simple. She thought we were going to be janitors for the rest of our lives. Which is a fine profession**,** but when Gilbert and I got picked up by a publisher, it was like, "Oh good, they have something to do!" Mom


"HOPEY'S BROTHER JOEY HEARD THAT SHE MOVED TO TEXAS AND JOINED A METAL BAND...
"SOMEONE ELSE HEARD THAT SHE IN WITH AN ART CROWD AND SHE EXPRESSES HERSELF IN CHICAGO.
HOPEY

was just happy because my Dad died when we were really young and my Mom never remarried or anything. She raised the six of us by herself. And by the time her five oldest boys—our sister was the youngest—we were all teenagers, she couldn't keep up anymore. She couldn't keep telling us, "I want you home at this time!" She just goes, "One day I threw my arms up and go, 'I just hope they make out okay.'" And so when she finds out that someone got a good job, she would go, "Oh good! Ay Dios!" [laughter all around]

Becky: Did you ever have to have a paycheck job? Or have you always been fortunate? Your art is wonderful, but everybody knows somebody who's a great artist, and they're always struggling for whatever reason.

Jaime: I got a janitor job within the first few issues of *Love and Rockets* because *Love and Rockets* was not paying bills. I did that for a couple of years. Then when *Love and Rockets* started to pay, I just said, "Hey, I think I can quit this. Hey, I can!" I hate to say it; we were pretty lucky. It was easy for me because I moved back to my Mom's house. And I wasn't paying rent. I was just bumming around going to shows and drawing comics.

This is before *Love and Rockets* came out and we had decided to self-publish the first one. I was still at Mom's and, "Hey, maybe we can do a comic and kind of sell it. Maybe we'll make some money." But we had no big aspirations. Then right away we were picked up by Fantagraphics. It didn't take a lot of struggling time. So when people ask me how to break into comics, all I can say is just do it. Because I didn't go through years and years and years of struggle. But when you think of it, I drew my whole life. I was leading up to that day. Hating school, so that's a struggle.

Ever: How do you get everything in *Love and Rockets* to work? Dinosaurs, zoots, wrestling, cholos, punks? Everything that you put…

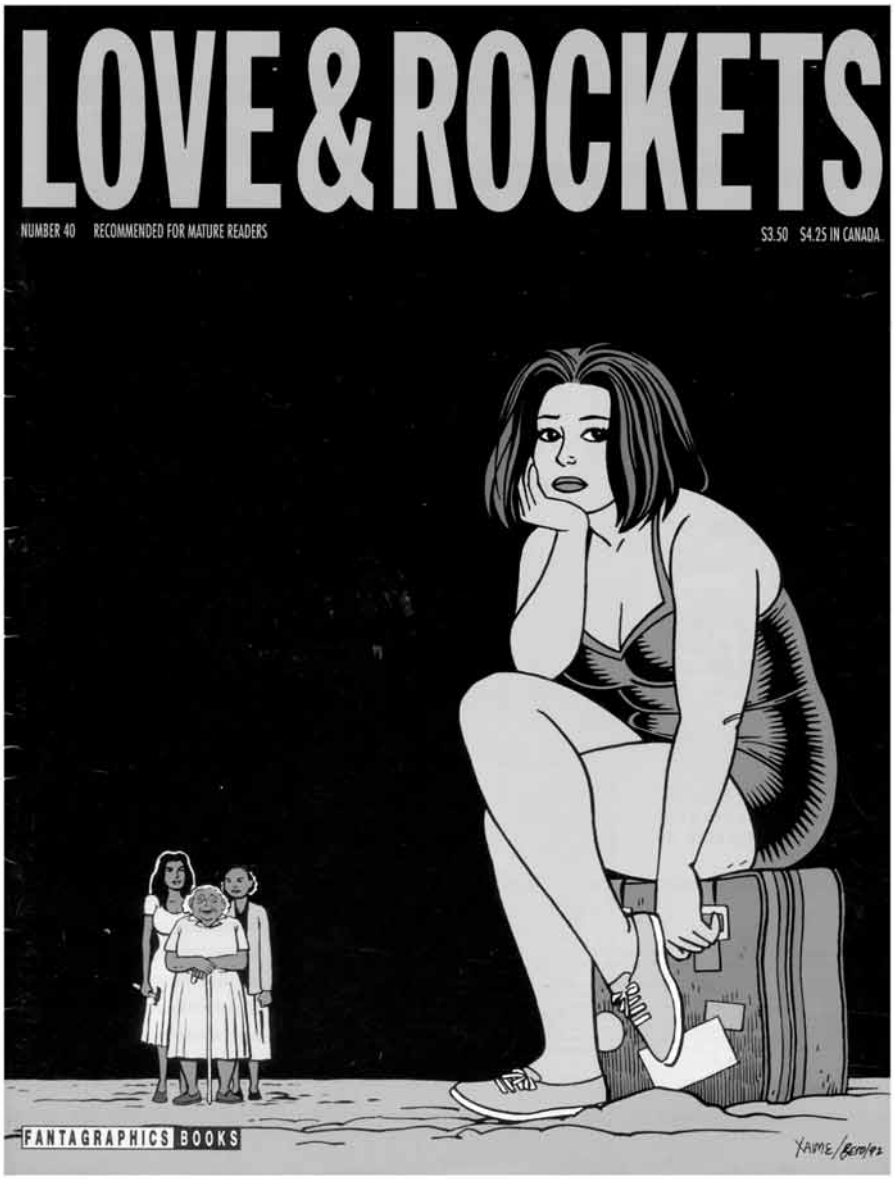
Jaime: How do I get it to work?

Ever: I never question it, when I see it.

Todd: There goes a dinosaur, of course.

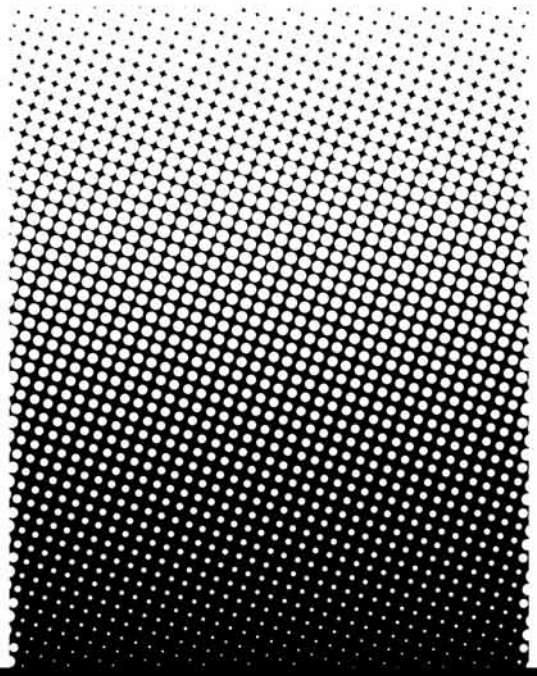
Jaime: Yeah, yeah. The dinosaurs, I had to eventually keep out of the real world stuff. Because you weren't going to believe the real world stuff if there were dinosaurs there. That was why I left characters like Hopey out of the mechanics stuff. She was just always there when Maggie came home from work but she was not part of this science fiction-y thing. Because Hopey was based in the real world—and I preferred it that way—she just wouldn't work if she rode on top of a dinosaur.

How do I make it work? Just treat it with a straight face. Do the goofy wrestling, do the rockets, robots, just treat it as serious as the real stuff. I think that's half the battle of making it work. And also, growing up, I grew up in the mid-'60s when junk culture was crazy! *Gilligan's Island*, *Batman* TV show. I loved monster movies. When I saw my first Santo movie, I was like, "He's a superhero, he's a wrestler, and he fights monsters."



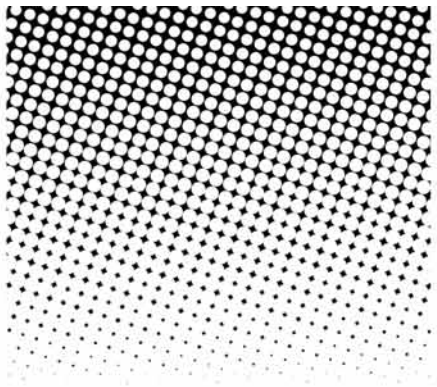
MAGGIE

I tried to create the world—Southern California that people didn't know. That most of the world didn't know about at the time.



Todd: He's a suave businessman.
Jaime: It's everything in one.
Ever: And he dances at discos. [All agreeing laughter.] Growing up, I thought that was gonna be my life. I was going to marry a Luchador and I would never know what his face was.
Jaime: Except when he kissed you, he would take the laces off. [All laughing] So, I just got this feeling that it all belonged together—rock'n'roll, monster movies, wrestling—just all this crazy culture of ours. This entertainment just belonged. And it all intertwined somehow. You had the New York Dolls singing about turning into the wolfman, howling at the moon. I just thought that was really cool. Alice Cooper sang about old horror actors. I liked all that stuff and I thought it all belonged. And to make it work is because it does belong to me. And I never treated it as—"*Citizen Kane* is a good movie but *The Magic Sword* is a shitty movie." No, they were the same to me. I would get the same thing out of both. It's just I find good in all of it. [All laughing.] Like I said, I don't know [More laughing]
Becky: Going back to the punk thing. Were you ever planning to do a book with all of the old flyers that you did and album covers would go over pretty well.
Ever: I would buy it.
Becky: I would buy it.
Jaime: Sure, I usually wait until someone comes to me with that. Like, "We'd like to make a book of that." I'm not that good a businessman. All the record covers I've done have come to me. I've never gone out and sent my portfolio somewhere or anything. I've been lucky in that way. A lot of artists aren't. But, yeah, yeah, if someone comes and says something like that, I'm usually like, "Sure, why not."
Todd: Do you have an archive of all the things and material that you've worked on?
Jaime: Yeah, I have copies and I've got some of the original art. I've sold a lot.
Ever: Which ones were some of your favorites that you did, the album covers?
Todd: I was surprised that you did the Indigo Girls cover.
Jaime: Yeah, their art department just said they're putting out a new album and they want you to do the cover. As simple as that. They totally left it up to me. What to do. And sometimes that's scary. I'm scratching my head. God, favorites? … I can't think of anything right now. But I do know one thing, a lot of album covers I did, I killed the band. [Everyone laughs]
Jaime: That was their last record.
Ever: Like who?
Jaime: At the time, that was the last Indigo Girls record. Maybe they started putting out records again. That was supposed to be the last Los Lobos record. I think they're back at it again. The first one I ever did of a major label was Michelle Shocked. And that was her last album for a long time until she came back. I just thought, "There's a pattern here."
Todd: Maybe you just put them on an indefinite hiatus. They come back. They're just taking a little bit of a break.
Jaime: Or maybe you just can't top it after that.
Ever: There you go!... You deal with emotionally raw situations that either you or someone you know has gone through. Your readers appreciate the delicate way you handle devastating life events. How do you stay vigilant against exploitive storylines?
Jaime: Just try to be grown-up about it. Try to be an outsider, from the outside looking in. Not being judgmental. I let my readers be the judges. I put a lot of stuff out there that I don't give them one hundred percent of. I let the reader fill in the rest, 'cause I like that interaction with the reader. So, if I'm doing something pretty heavy, I say, "Here's life, what do you think? This is life, man—whether we like it or not." I don't make things up because I'd have to answer for that. I really like engaging with the reader so I kind of throw it out there and go, "Okay, if you tell me I'm full of shit, I'm full of shit. Whatever you make come out of that, that's your right."
Ever: On that note, *Love Bunglers* made me cry from start to finish.
Becky: Yeah, I think it made us all cry.
Jaime: I have to admit, I turned the amps up to eleven. On purpose.
Ever: It was beautiful. It answered a lot of questions.
Becky: I especially loved—it felt like a cliff hanger, that double panel.
Todd: Maggie and Ray in *Love Bunglers*—as a reader, I do appreciate that you're dealing with such heavy, heavy stuff. It's emotionally charged, but it's given with such an even and steady hand. And that's what makes it much more powerful, too.
Jaime: It was a lot of work. What's funny is at the same time—since I was wrapping up basically thirty years of what had been going on since the first issue—I was answering a lot of questions. Most of it just fell on the page. It's like I wasn't doing it. It just kind of fell together and I was just watching it happen.

And I was wondering, "Was I just waiting for this?" That I had this stored up so long, that finally it just opened the floodgates. There was a lot of work—editing and putting it together, and keeping out stuff, keeping in stuff—but for the most part, it's like, well, here it is. Bam.
Ever: Will we ever get to know more about Speedy, and why did you make him die? Why?
Jaime: I have to confess that I wanted to kill somebody, and he became the person. I was kind of tired of the way superhero comics would handle death. Or even television, sometimes. I was just like, "I'll show you how to kill someone off!" [Laughs all around.]
Ever: And you did!
Jaime: And I thought, "This is also gonna be a *character,*" you know? This is not gonna be just a character who came in last issue. And I'm afraid it became him. Sometimes I'm sad about that. Why did I kill him? I didn't need to. Gilbert said the same thing about his character Tonansin. He said, "I didn't have to kill her. What were we doing? What were we thinking?" It was in support of the story.
Todd: Well, you killed Ever's future husband. [All laugh]
Jaime: Speedy? He was no good. His Mom said so. [More, louder laughs again]
Ever: The way that it's written—all three of us have a completely different idea of what we think happened. So that's why I was asking if you were going to go into more depth about Speedy's death.
Jaime: That was the first time I left it open to the reader. I have an idea. But since I never put it down, I can change my mind. Yeah, for a long time, it was just he had just killed himself. OD'd or whatever.
Becky: I told you.
Jaime: But then I was thinking, "Well, maybe he didn't." And then I thought, "No, no I'm not going to do the story where you thought it was this, but he was really murdered by Hopey."
Ever: I thought it was maybe one of the crazy girls who was after him. Like, accidentally.
Jaime: Since it's never been told, that's correct too.
Ever: What did you say [to Amina, taking pictures during the interview]?
Amina: That someone beat him to death, that he got in a fight.
Jaime: All of them are right.
Becky: 'Cause he was on the decline there, it could have any of those things. So how far ahead do you plan your story arcs? Or do you just have a flow?
Jaime: It's more of a flow. But, there are a couple of characters I can picture really old. That's as far as it goes. I write it as I age. Maggie's five years younger than me. I have that in my head. So, whatever I'm going through…
Becky: She's coming upon it.
Jaime: Yeah. And Ray's a couple of years younger than me. So, I think about it that way. I picture them as real people living their lives. If I don't do a character for ten years, I just picture that they moved somewhere, that they got a job somewhere else. Or they're raising a family and they're not hanging out anymore.
Becky: Is that what happened with Hopey? 'Cause one of my questions is how the heck did Hopey become a teacher?
Jaime: Hopey's kind of harder to write than people would think. She's a main character, but I don't really know what's going on in her head.
Becky: So, she's as unpredictable as she appears to be?
Jaime: Yeah, I did that on purpose. I took away her thought balloons. She used to have thoughts in the old issues. But I took them away, because you're not supposed to know what Hopey's thinking, just how she reacts to things. And it works, but it can be pretty hard. Partly, like when she went away was because all my punk friends that were like her—or punk girls I would see at the shows or whatever who were like her—they went



Why would I want to make something that I don't want to make?

away. I didn't see them. 'Cause I stopped going to shows and I go, "What do punks do when they get old?"

I know what I did. I'm lucky and I became a cartoonist. Like Hopey especially—real fireballs, what do they do? Do they survive? Do they die young? And so, for a long time, I would just get rid of her, just because I had no idea where her life would go. And then, I found out this pattern about punk kids is you know 'em at the shows, you know 'em in the scene. When you start to back out, when people start to have "respectable" lives, they go and they raise families or they go away. They're not into the punk scene anymore. They're gone for a long time.

Then like ten or twenty years later, they start to come back. You start to see them again. Or I did, anyway. And I go, "Oh! They're alive! I didn't expect this person to…" and then you find out some of them got real corporate jobs. Some of them had bad drug habits or alcoholism. Some of them got sick and weren't expected to live but they made a comeback. And I started to see people in my life coming back. My wife, I knew as a young punk, and she got out of the scene and did other things. And I thought well, "I'm just going to know her from Christmas cards and things like that." Then she came back and she had a little daughter. And she invited me to her house. She goes, "I'm back in Pasadena. Come meet my daughter." I went and then we started dating. And I basically raised her daughter and we've been together for a while now. And Hopey was heavily based on her when she was young and she hates me telling that.

Everyone: Ooohh!

Jaime: I go oh, "Hopeys do survive. Some of them do; the crazy ones." And then I started to understand Hopey again. I started bringing her back and then I thought, "Well, she's gonna become a teacher." Because some people can just turn around and do something that they never expected of themselves. I kind of did it as a curve. You know like, "What is Hopey up to now? Oh my god, she's gonna be a teacher." I kind of did that to play with the fans a little. And it's worked. The current story line I'm working on is real hard writing her because she is not the same person. In fact, of all my characters, she's the only one who has really changed. And I kind of like that. It came by accident. I go wow! Of all of them, the only one who did a really big change was Hopey. Who would have thought?

Ever: Even in the last couple of issues, too. You get to notice that she seems kind of stand-offish with Maggie.

Jaime: Yeah, yeah, and she kind of doesn't care about the punk thing anymore.

Ever: Yeah, like that intimacy is gone.

Jaime: Yeah, like "This is my life."

Becky: Like her hate for Julie Wree, it's kind of waned. She's calmed down.

Jaime: And Maggie and the others are like, "What the hell's going on here? We hate Julie Wree! What's going on?" And Hopey's like, "Well this is my life now. I don't do that anymore." You know, of course she does. The story's not over yet. [Everyone laughs.]

Ever: What was a situation that you put one of the characters in that you felt really bad about?

Jaime: Oh, there were regrets, yeah. But, at the top of my head, I can't think of it. I'll shout it out when it comes back to me.

Todd: Because one thing with *Love and Rockets* is that your responsible for these characters through these long periods of time. It's not episodic. It's not like well, Superman gets killed and he comes back in a different form next.

Jaime: Yeah.

Todd: It's a lot of responsibility.

Ever: Sometimes you have situations where you put two certain characters in the same situations and they go separate ways.

Jaime: Yeah.

Ever: And you see the dynamic of each character—who they are as a person and how they felt about whatever their decision was.

Jaime: Yeah. Maggie and Hopey are a good example because as I'm writing that story we're talking about right now, I'm just figuring out Hopey was the tough street girl, but she really wasn't. She was just an ex-middle class kid who just wanted to bust out. Maggie came from a real street life where she understands more than Hopey does. Even if Hopey's the risk taker, Maggie's the one who really understands how life works. You know, in the dirty world. And it's fun, trying to kind of figure that out. So, Hopey, the wild reckless one is the one going off crazy, but does she really understand? Does she really come from the bottom like Maggie did? And so, I'm trying to figure that out between the two of them. And that's why they clash a lot, yet at the same time need each other.

Becky: Over the years, I've heard talk about movies or an animated series. Is anything happening with that?

Jaime: I've done Hollywood talk since the beginning and nothing ever came out of it. I'm to the point where they basically don't want to make what I want to make. Why would I want to make something that I don't want to make?

Ever: I don't want you to make anything you don't want to make. 'Cause then I'll be upset.

Todd: Cause then the integrity of the piece is a lot of the power.

Jaime: Yeah. The stuff is very personal to me and I think, "What would I do if I had all the power to make a movie?" I still would have to get actors. I think the best way to bring out a character in an actor is to find something in them that—I'm not a director so I don't really know—but you just let them find the voice. Say if I wanted to get two actors to do Maggie and Hopey. They have to feed off each other. That would be the magic of these two characters being filmed. How do I make these two actors feel like themselves if they're being something that is so under lock and key with me? They have to be Maggie and Hopey or it's no good. But at the same time, I wouldn't want to make actors just speak the lines. So, it's real hard. I can't let it go, but at the same time I should. If it's going to be successful. I think a lot about it. I don't like the Hollywood talks. It's always because *Love and Rockets*, to me, is *Love and Rockets*. To them, it's what *Love and Rockets* can be. They always go, "We can do something with this." But I go…

Becky: This is already something.

Jaime: Yeah. And rather than argue with them. "We're not going to agree here so…."

Ever: I think they would cut it up. You know, like when they would show movies on like *Pulp Fiction* on channel five. It ended up being like a forty-five minute movie. [Everybody laughs.]

Becky: Oh, no. That's terrible.

Jaime: Also, I would have to work with people. That's another hard one. Because I've worked with myself for thirty-five years. [All laughing.]

Todd: Is there a movie based on a graphic novel, that you actually enjoyed the movie?

Jaime: I like the comics because they're the comics. Let's say, the Peanuts cartoons**,** I grew up when the first ones came out. The Christmas one, the "A Charlie Brown Christmas," It's the Great Pumpkin, Charlie Brown." Those early ones, "You're in Love, Charlie Brown." I got into those first, before the strip. Those really, really influenced me writing, doing comics when I was a kid. I was doing kid comics. I couldn't draw like that, so in my little kid brain, I created my own way of talking, basically. Those cartoons really influenced me a lot. Yet, I could read the comic strip in a whole different manner. I like 'em for different reasons.

Ever: Where do you see Maggie and Ray going? And where do you see Hopey and Maggie going?

Jaime: I'd be giving it away, but I'll try. [Everyone laughs.] I think about Ray and Maggie's relationship because I haven't really shown them be a couple—actually going to the store kind of stuff. I haven't shown enough of that, I think. All I can think

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about writing a story about breaking them up, because that has some kind of message.

But I go, "Why do I want 'em to break up? They just got together!" There are five people in my head fighting constantly of what you could do, what you should do. "No, you can't do that." "Well, why can't you do that?" I'm constantly arguing with myself. And so, Maggie and Hopey right now—well, we have separate lives. We can't play around. That's what the story's basically about. And Hopey knows that more than Maggie because Hopey's raising a five-year-old son. And Maggie's kind of like, "We're going to a punk reunion, let's play like the old days!" She's got a, "I can't wait to be near you" kind of thing. And she's finding out, oh, if you don't want to ruin people's lives, you can't do that. That's what she's learning. It's not easy for her.

So I use all that. But then I think about the comic has to move forward. I still need the characters to have their fun. How do I do that when they can't have fun? And I go, "Well, do a story about how they can't have fun," which is what the current story is. I don't know. It's hard. Because I could easily just make it so melodramatic so, like, "Oh, they're leaving, the story's over, and they run toward each other and kiss." That is so easy to do, but I'm just trying to hold on to the integrity of the work. That's partly why *Love Bunglers* works so well. Because that was the one time I said, "Okay, you guys have suffered enough for thirty years. I'm gonna give everybody a happy ending. Or, in a *Love and Rockets* happy ending." I thought, "Ray has been chasing Maggie for a long time. I'm gonna give it to you." It was pretty much that.

Ever: But everybody's always chasing Maggie.

Becky: Yeah, that's right. She's totally oblivious. She thinks nobody loves her and everybody loves her.

Jaime: That's another hard thing, because…

Ever: Even the Frogmouth loves her!

Becky: Yeah! Right? Grudgingly, but she does.

Jaime: Yeah, because sometimes I'm like, "Okay, Maggie is supposed to be the Latina who lives basically, in L.A., who is walking down the street and you go, "Well, there's a Latina." She's got this rich life, yet people see her as this invisible person. Or just a person walking down the street. That's why, in the beginning of *Love Bunglers*, that guy goes, "There's my angel. Who is she? Who is this woman?" And we all know, but to them, it's that woman who walks by here every day. Who is she? She could be nobody. And then I think about that with Maggie. Yet, I'm always having people fall in love with her. At the same time. And I go, "Well, I guess she is not a nobody."

Ever: I think it's because she doesn't try.

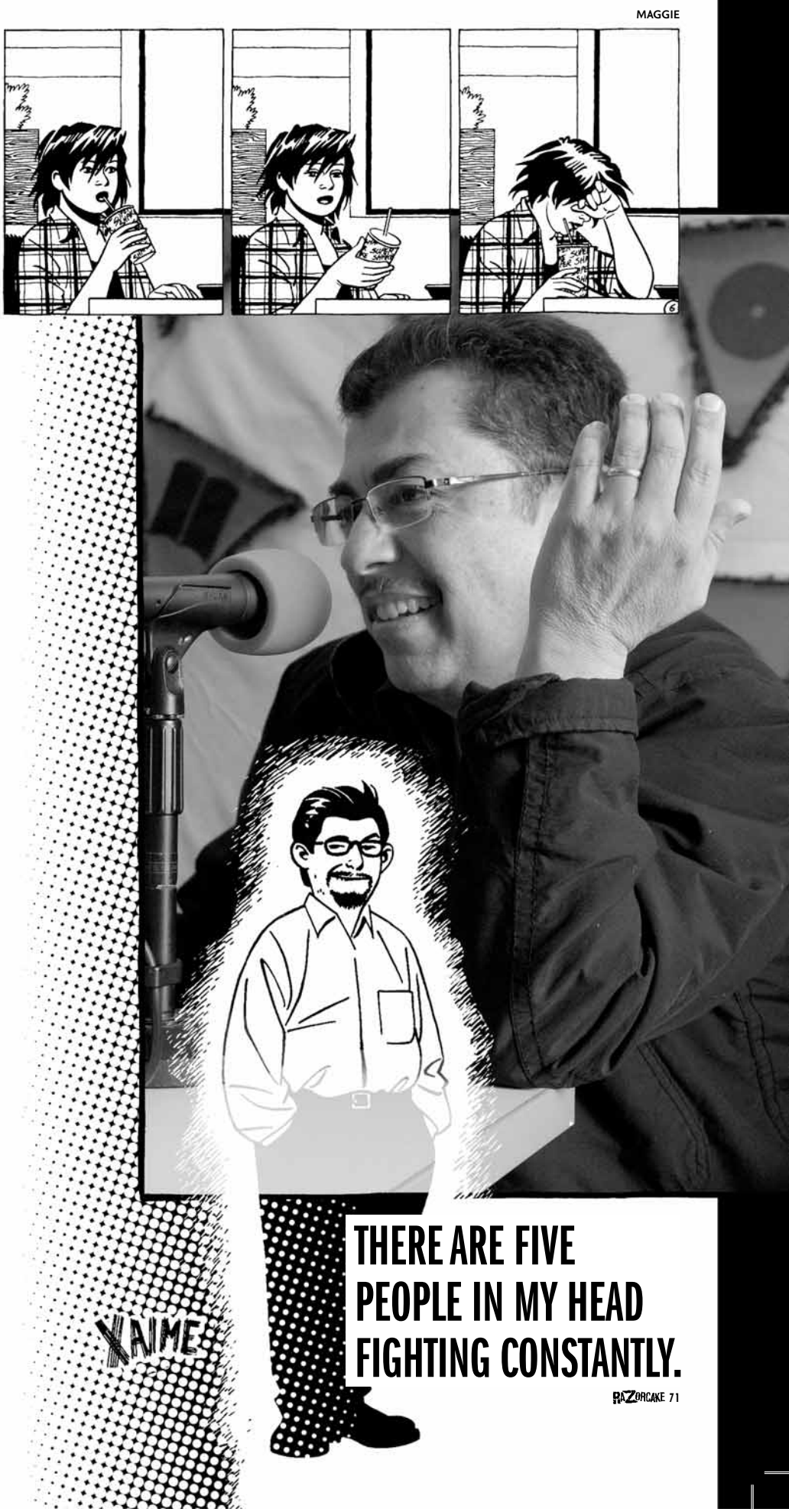
Jaime: Her self-esteem isn't always very high.

Becky: So, do you have any favorite supplies—favorite inks or do you use a brush?

Jaime: No, no. I use a nib. A dip.

Becky: Does your choice change?

Jaime: No, I'm using the same approach I



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used back when I was a teenager. My brothers told me, "You know comics aren't drawn with ball point pens." They use pen and ink. And brushes. I remember going to the local art store. Buying a bottle of ink and I bought this set of, the Speedball—the set of calligraphy nibs? And then they would have the one sharp nib. The crow quill. And I bought that set, but I go, "What am I gonna use these calligraphy ones for? You can't ink with that." So, I had that one nib and I learned to draw with that. And I was like, "This is scratchy." It just took a while to get it down. And then after a while, I got comfortable with that nib. I've used that same one for thirty-five years. Maybe longer.

Becky: Wow.

Jaime: Not that nib but the style. But every once in a while, I'll use this nib instead and see how it works. But I always go back to the other one. It's just a safety thing. I'm scared to change. I remember in the sixth issue—this was really early—Gilbert went to brush. And he said, "You should go to brush." And I wouldn't do it at first because I was just scared it would ruin the art. I would try brush and I would go, "I don't like the way I do it." I found out only last year why. I know it's crazy. It's because I have a heavy hand.

Becky: Me, too. I go through nibs fast, 'cause of too much pressure.

Jaime: When I use a brush, my lines start off really thin and then they get thicker and thicker. I go, "What am I doing wrong?" I never could understand why do these artists get it so perfect and detailed. I can't do it. And I realized it's 'cause my hand gets heavy. Heavier and heavier, and that's my excuse.

Ever: How are you able to give the characters in *Love and Rockets* the same amount of love you give the main characters—from storylines to their physical aesthetics? It seems like every character in your book—if you don't meet them right away, you're going to meet them further down the road. And they have their own story.

Jaime: One advantage I have is time. A character will sit in the back of my head for a long time. I won't write them for a long time then I'll figure out, "Oh, I know who this person is." Then it's time to do their story. That's the cool thing about creating so many characters. If you have an idea for a story, and you say, "I'll put Maggie in it." Then you say, "No, Maggie's a little too insecure for this story. I need somebody who has more courage for this story to go in the direction I want it to." And then I'll just think, "who do I have?" And then I'll go, "Oh, maybe it could be Daffy," so, I don't have to change Maggie. She can remain herself. I just use someone else to do the hard work that she can't.

Ever: How do you explain how you physically draw everybody? We look at Gilbert's drawing and he has a certain aesthetic. But the way that you draw, you give everybody love. They could be not the most physically attractive person, but the way you draw them makes them physically attractive. Or you want to know more about them.

Jaime: I try! No secret, other than I just want to give you a good character. Whether they're mean or nice. I want even the mean ones to be appealing. I don't want you to leave halfway through. So characters—like the Frogmouth took a long time for people to like her while I was just having fun with her. I was going, "This character is so wrong, I love it." And, she's just wrong! Everything she does is just bad.

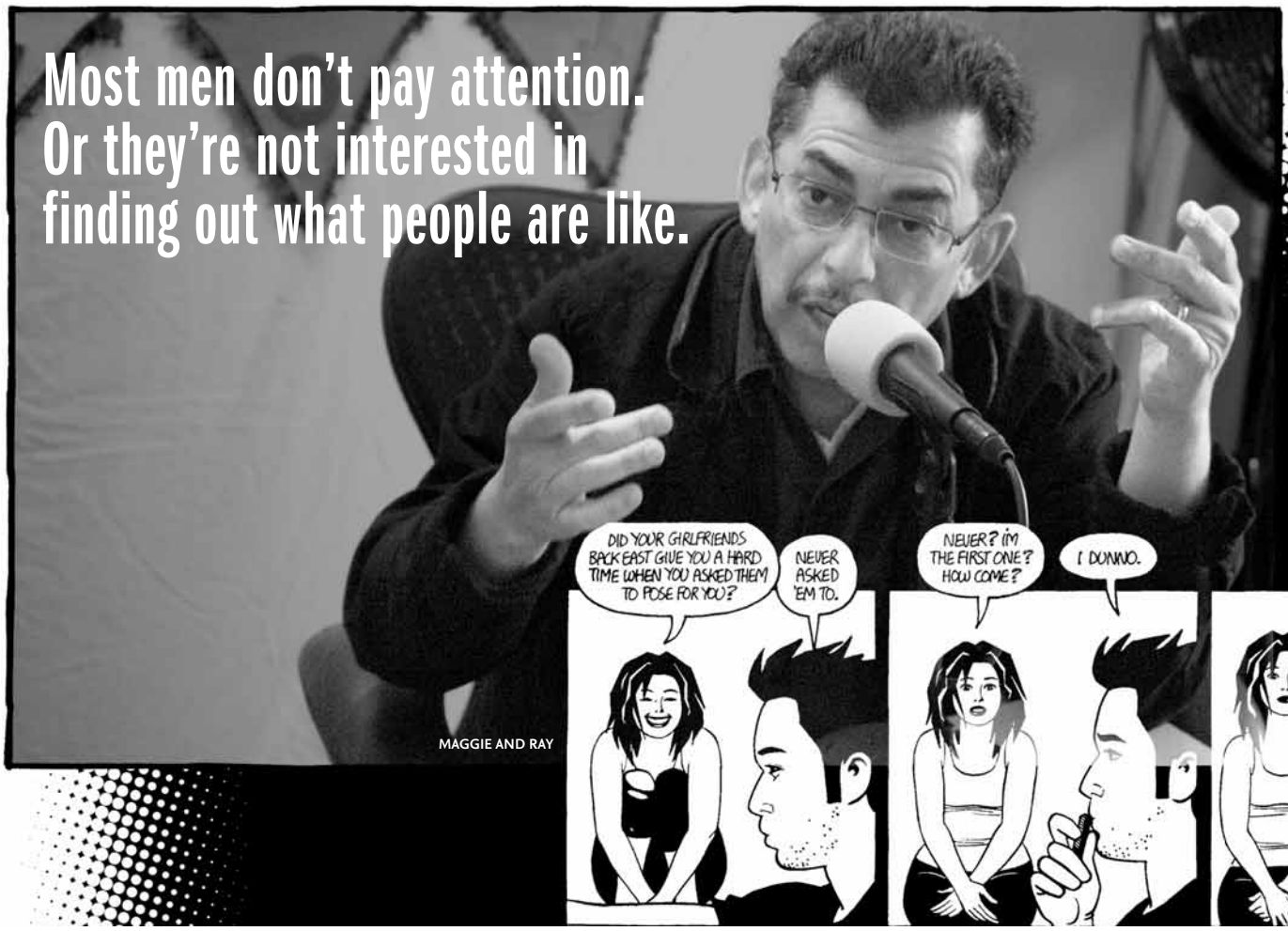
Becky: Her irritating qualities come across so well.

Jaime: Yeah! And I added her awful voice just to top it off. But I just loved doing her and I thought, "This terrible person, I'm gonna try my hardest for you to still like 'em—or still want to read them" Sometimes it doesn't work. Some people go, "Rrrr, I hate that character. I never read the stories with that character."

Ever: I think it's fun when she pops up…. And then, your ability to write women so well, too. Where you see the cattiness between them. Most men don't see that. Most men are like, "What do you mean? That girl's nice." It's like, "No, dude. She's totally not." You see it and you're able to put it on paper.

Jaime: It's just most men don't pay attention. Or they're not interested in finding out what people are like. They just want them how they want them. Ooo! [Laughs from everyone.] I don't know; I just like the characters. I like writing women, I like drawing women. I just—I love women. When I found out that women like the way I wrote women, well, there's my permission to continue. It's just something I like doing. And it brought me a lot of women fans, which in 1982 it was not very common in comic books, let me tell you. 1982 was—woo!—that was a dead time.

Becky: Another thing we're really impressed with is your use of negative space, both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visually and emotionally. What influenced that? Or is it something that you always had the ability to do?

Jaime: I didn't know the word for it. I didn't know what negative space was until I was in an art class and a teacher said, "Today we're going to talk about negative space." We had drawn these portraits of other students. The teacher put them up. He got a pastel crayon and colored behind and around the drawing, all the negative space. And I didn't know what he was talking about. It took me a long time to understand what that was. Yet, I was doing it anyway. I didn't know I was doing it.

And then there was another time; it could have been the same teacher. He made us draw on a board, just diagonal and horizontal lines. And he said, "But I want you to make everything spaced differently." And so, he'd go, "There's one line in the center, and then the vertical line is not in the center, okay?" Well, these two are the same size, what do you do with that? Okay, so you add another line to make that one shorter. And it was this exercise we did. And we only did it for a day or two, yet it was just something I never forgot—which was basically balancing a picture. It's just something automatic in me.

I just remember those two exercises. They just helped me. They're just in my head every time I do a drawing. Just today I was penciling something, and I go, "Oh! I like the way this panel is laid out." I said, "Aww, but she's kind of right in the center of this negative space," so I erased her and moved her over just a tiny bit. Or I would just add a hand on the hip just to off balance it. It's just in my head. Constant.

Becky: Emotionally, too. Because a lot of comics have—they're trying to make the characters say things all the time. A lot of your panels are just images and it's enough. You already know everything. So that's really interesting, too.

Jaime: Yeah. That's something I learned from comics and movies. The stuff that doesn't need to be said. It's there in the gesture. That's why I use a lot of facial expressions and body language 'cause they speak volumes. You know Maggie is having an insecure time talking to someone if she's kind of unbalanced. Or something where you can just see it in her face or her position, her posture.

And that helps a lot where I don't have to say, "I'm really nervous here, I should go."

I learned that from certain comic book artists, who just added to the words. The picture spoke more because the words and the image helped tell the situation. It helped a lot and I use it constantly. Sometimes when I'm writing a scene of two people talking. And I'm having Hopey going off and she's complaining about something to someone and they're kind of listening going, "Yeah, I know what you mean." Or, "Oh, yeah. That's really interesting." I'll go back and read that whole scene and go, this can be just a Hopey monologue. This person answering isn't saying anything. So, then sometimes I go, "Well, maybe it should just be Hopey. She's not talking to anybody. She's just talking to the reader, or herself." It's a lot of different things that help it; sometimes it's the least amount that helps it the most.

Jaime: It was a surprise to me, too.

Becky: How do you see the next four years going? Do you think it's going to be like the Reagan years all over again? Are your characters going to have to deal with some of that fallout?

Jaime: I don't know. We'll see. I can't imagine it being good. Yeah, *Love and Rockets* was created in the Reagan years and it survived the Bushes. We'll see. I really don't know because this is the first time I'm taking it personally. And I wonder if I should. I don't mean ignoring it and letting the world fall apart. I didn't used to know what was going on and I didn't care, yet I got along and I watched people survive. This time I'm too close to it. Because of the internet I know too much. And I'm wondering, is it different or is it the same? Just 'cause it's the same doesn't mean that's good.

Becky: So, are you of the school of thought where some artists say, "Bad times make for great art"?

Jaime: Gilbert mentioned that in the early years of *Love and Rockets*. I think Reagan was re-elected or something. And we go, "Aww, great." And he goes, "Yeah, but think of this, people do really good art under these circumstances." And then now there are a lot of people arguing that to the point of being angry about it. And I'm like, "No, you're just angry because people are telling you to do good art." They're telling you, "Make great art! This is a good time to make great art."

No, no, no, no. For me, it just happens. Whatever you're stewing in the back of your head will come out. And it will come out stronger than you thought. That's the way it always worked for me. It's not like I'm telling people, "Oh, because we're in a shitty situation, why don't you make art. That'll be good." That's not what I'm saying. I just believe it does come out of you. Because it's poor people who are forgotten. They survive because they have to. Because they have no choice. I see it kind of the same way. People can say I'm full of it, but that's the way I see it.

WHAT DO PUNKS DO WHEN THEY GET OLD?

HOPEY AND MAGGIE

Ever: Okay, in the series, who would you marry, who would you fuck, and who would you kill? Other than the obvious, Speedy.

Jaime: Of my characters?

Ever: I had to think of that random question.

Jaime: I'd do Rena. But I don't think she'd let me. [Laughs all round.]

Ever: He's scared.

Jaime: Who would I marry?

Ever: If you weren't already married.

Jaime: Of course, I'd marry Maggie. 'Cause there'd be no surprises. I'd know everything about her. And what was the third one?

Ever: And kill. If you had to kill somebody.

Ever and Becky: Other than Speedy.

Jaime: Kill, of my characters. There's a couple of them. But I can't say 'cause they might get killed.

Ever: Okay, don't tell us! Don't tell us!

Jaime: Okay, or just die. Natural causes.

Becky: Okay, so I always see them nibbling, eating. What's Maggie's favorite food.

Jaime: That's easy. Marshmallow Peeps.

Ever: I wanna know if there's gonna be another Lucha between the aunts.

Jaime: My new person venturing into wrestling, Angel. I'm trying to work out her life. Because she's kind of lost right now. No, but I got plans for Maggie's aunt.

Becky: We haven't seen her for a while.

Jaime: I know, I know.

Becky: Rena, too?

Jaime: Rena? She showed up in that one story I did for the *New York Times*. We reprinted it. The color story. That was the last time you saw Rena. But, yeah. I've got plans for Vicki. I just can't find a story to put it in.

Becky: Thank you!

Ever: Thank you! We're so happy that you came!

TOP FIVES
RAZORCAKE

Alicia Armijo
Top 5 Songs That I Can't Stop Listening to from Days N Daze New Album Crustfall
1. "Self-Loathing"
2. "Little Blue Pills, Pt. 4"
3. "Exhausted Insomniac"
4. "The Abliss" ft. Scott Sturgeon
5. "Crustfall"

Art Ettinger
• MDC / The Antidon'ts, Split 7"
• Bad Cop/Bad Cop, *Warriors* LP
• Monty Neysmith, *Monty Neysmith Meets the Bishops* LP
• Saccharine Trust, *The Great One Is Dead* 2 x LP
• Cock Sparrer, *Forever* LP

Bill Pinkel
• Cyanide Pills, *Sliced and Diced* LP
• Needles//Pins, *Good Night Tomorrow* LP
• Bruce Springsteen *Born to Run* audiobook narrated by the Boss himself.
• Radioactivity, Bad Sports, Maniac and Sweet Reaper live at the Redwood on a weeknight! I'm still tired.
• The Marked Men show next week, probably.

Billy Kostka
• Institute, *Subordination*
• Kaleidoscope, *Vol. 3*
• S.B.F., *Double Blind*
• Liquids, *26 Recordings*
• Glue, Self-titled LP

Chad Williams
1. Cock Sparrer, *Forever* LP
2. Descendents, *Who We Are* (digital single)
3. Long Knife, *Sewers of Babylon* EP
4. Power Trip, *Nightmare Logic* LP
5. Walk The Plank, *Cemetery Vacation* LP

Chris Terry
• 45 Adapters, *They Call It Justice* 7"
• Life Stinks, "*Hanging from the Ceiling" b/w "Shadow Chilling on the Sidewalk"* 7"
• Kendrick Lamar, *DAMN.* LP
• Sheer Mag, compilation LP
• Octavia Butler, *Parable of the Sower* (novel)

Craven Rock
1. Revival of Anti-Racist Action in the South and Midwest (being a part of their throwing Nazis out of Irish Rover for celebrating Hitler's b-day felt great, too)
2. Drug Church, *Hit Your Head*
3. Panopticon, *Eternal Autumn* CD
4. QELD, *Kush Zombies*
5. Thorne, *Nothing Was Beautiful and Everything Hurt*

Daryl Gussin
• Radioactivity, Bad Sports, Maniac, Sweet Reaper, live
• Nature Boys, Self-titled LP
• The Schizophonics, live
• Pressing On, *Future* 7"
• Stalins Of Sound, *Biology Museum* CS and live

Designated Dale
1. Big Drill Car, *A Never Ending Endeavor* CD
2. All Systems Go!, Self-titled CD
3. Grocery Outlet Bargain Market in Burbank. Holy fucksticks.
4. The Warriors, *The Original Motion Picture Soundtrack* LP
5. Neighborhood Brats playing again, and that is a wonderful fucking thing.

Eric Baskauskas
Summer Rotation 2017
• Concealed Blade, Self-titled 12"
• Power Trip, *Nightmare Logic* LP
• Ajax, *Bleach for Breakfast* 7" (I found a copy!)
• Color TV, Self-titled 7"
• The Copyrights, *Mutiny Pop* LP

Gabby Gonzalez
Punk Bands of Today
• Olvido
• Bleak Age
• Skip Church
• No Approach
• Humanoids

Garrett Barnwell
1. Nothington, *In the End* CD
2. Hyper Tensions, Self-titled CS
3. Abolitionist, *The Vicious Rumor* LP
4. Spell, *Time Waves* LP
5. Plini, *Handmade Cities* CD

Griffin Wynne
Top 5 Recent Shows I'm Happy I Suppressed My Social Anxiety to Go See
• Adult Mom (their first time in L.A.) at Junior High 6/12 (I cried the whole time).
• (Sandy) Alex G at The Echo 6/16. They didn't have a set list and just played whatever people shouted. (They played "Harvey!").
• Desidia, Relaxing 5 Minute Videos with Willie Gussin, and Pauline Lay, 6/11.
• First night of the Pedal Strike residency at Cafe NELA 6/3.
• The girl I babysit lackadaisically calling Trump a deformed peach when I was trying to teach her fractions. She's eight. (Not music related, it's just amazing.)

Indiana Laub
• Wet The Rope, *The Sum of Our Scars*
• Xetas, *The Tower*
• Vagabon, *Infinite Worlds*
• Dogbreth, *Second Home*
• Healing Powers, "He Did Not Live to See the Realisation of His Dream"

Jennifer Federico
Top 5 Soundtrack for My New Home in L.A.
1. Uranium Club
2. Maniac
3. Poison Idea
4. Cloak & Dagger
5. Radioactivity

Jim Joyce
1. *No Exposure* #3
2. *Minor Leagues* #3
3. Mikey Erg interview in *Razorcake* #98
4. Joey's isolated vocals to "Teenage Lobotomy" on YouTube
5. *Lost in Arcadia*, dystopian Albuquerque novel by Sean Gandert

Jimmy Alvarado
• Ollin and La Tuya at the Redwood 3/17/17. Giggin' and hangin' with familia at the best annual St. Patrick's Day show in L.A.
• Portland, Ore. 5/24-6/3/17. Lotsa of nature-drenched adventure with my wife, some treasures procured at the faboo Green Noise Records, and much-needed rest from the daily grind.
• *Mutant Rocker: The Art of Randy "Biscuit" Turner Vol. 1* book, by David Ensminger. Some love for one of punk's true originals.
• Deadbeats, *666-1313* 2 x LP. All-over-the-map brilliant from one of L.A.'s OG groups. If you haven't yet procured a copy, you're definitely slippin'.

Nothing like
a film directed by an old punker with an indestructible female lead.

• *Wonder Woman* film, directed by Patty Jenkins. Nothing but love for a film directed by an old punker with an indestructible female lead that pisses off multiple segments of the right wing for the stupidest of reasons.

Joe Dana

1. Riverboat Gamblers and Soviettes at Backstage Bar at Punk Rock Bowling Vegas
2. Me First And The Gimme Gimmes at Backstage Bar at Punk Rock Bowling Vegas
3. Howard Hallis Art Show at La Luz De Jesus
4. DJ Little D, DJ Faux Reelz, Bill Pinkel, Metztli Dagger, Jeff Proctor, and Jon Mule at our past two Razorcake Hearts Drinking Beer and Listening to Records Happy Hour at Footsies
5. My brother, Colin Dana, Chris Castro, and I becoming part of the Loyal Order of Drooling Bastards at the Tonga Hut

Juan Espinosa

• Coke Bust/Despise You, Split 7" tie with Cave State/Concussive, Split 7"
• Culture Shock (Youth Attack), Self-titled LP
• Dauðyflin LP tie, with No Faith, *Forced Subservience* LP
• Long Knife, *Sewers of Babylon* 7"
• Jeffery BLVD And The Main Drag, *Normal Girl* 7"

Kayla Greet

• RVIVR, Snuggle!, Young Go Hards at Black Lodge, Seattle
• Caves, *Always Why*
• *3 Gigs* podcast by Dominic Davi
• The Dahmers, *In the Dead of Night*
• Ramona / Hard Sulks, Split CS

Kevin Dunn

1. Totally Slow, *Bleed Out*
2. Lost Balloons, Self-titled
3. Fur Coats, *Gumballs in the Meritocracy*
4. Jim And The French Vanilla, *Afraid of the House*
5. *Everyone Loves You Back* by Louie Cronen (book)

Kurt Morris

1. Mutoid Man, *War Moans*
2. 40 Watt Sky, *Wider Than the Sky*
3. Oxbow, *Thin Black Duke*
4. Müscle Wörship, Self-titled
5. Metallica, *Ride the Lightning*

Mark Twistworthy

• Part Chimp, *IV* LP
• Institute, *Subordination* LP
• USA/Mexico, *Laredo* LP
• Super Thief, *Stuck* CS
• Moral Panic, Self-titled LP

Michael T. Fournier

• Sluggo's, Chattanooga, TN
• The Wild Cow, Nashville, TN
• Hot Tip, *Hold Me, Closely* LP
• Screaming Females at ONCE Gallery, Somerville, Mass. 5/8/2017
• Recording a new EP with Dead Trend on Trump Day 100.

Mike Faloon

1. The Bats, *The Deep Set* LP
2. Jaimie Branch, *Fly or Die* LP
3. Mekons, *Existentialism* CD and book
4. *In Love with These Times – My Life with Flying Nun Records*, Roger Shepherd (book)
5. Superchunk, *"I Got Cut" b/w "Up Against the Wall"* download single

Nick Toerner

• Career Suicide, *Machine Response* LP
• Isotopes, *1994 World Series Champions* LP
• Brickfight, *To What End* LP
• The Ergs!, *Goddamn Death Dedication* 7"
• Chixdiggit, *2012* LP

Paul Silver

1. Jim Jones And The Righteous Mind, *Super Natural* LP
2. Casket, Wolves & Wolves & Wolves & Wolves, Spanish Love Songs, Ash Williams at Tower Bar, San Diego
3. Grand-Pop, *Eight Nights* LP
4. Melted, DFMK, Casket, Surprise Vacation at Parks & Rock, Anaheim, CA
5. Emperor X, *Oversleepers International* LP

Rene Navarro

1. Rediscovering the joys of public transit.
2. Sponsoring my favorite record store, Ciruela Eléctrica, so my friends in Tijuana can enjoy this publication.
3. Riding my bike to Chinatown and broadcasting Radio Solitario, Hungry Wolves, and Thirsty Thursdays Presented by The Dollar Boys live on KCHUNG.
4. Dogs.
5. Being gifted the reissue of the *Singles* soundtrack on double vinyl with the bonus CD featuring unreleased Paul Westerberg and Chris Cornell tracks.

Rev. Nørb

• Drakulas, *Raw Wave* LP
• Control Freaks, *Mindless Entertainment* LP
• Midnite Snaxxx, *Chew On This!* LP
• Anti-Nowhere League, *League Style* LP
• *Brick through the Window: An Oral History of Punk Rock, New Wave and Noise in Milwaukee, 1964-1984*, by Steve Nodine, Eric Beaumont, Clancy Carroll, and Dave Luhrssen (book)

Rich Cocksedge

• Strike Anywhere, Petrol Girls, Bear Trade live at The Exchange, Bristol and The Lemon Grove, Exeter
• Newport County 2, Notts County 1—retaining EFL status against all odds in the final match of the season.
• Mark O'Brien scoring the winning goal for Newport County—one of the best moments of my life.
• Clowns, Throwing Stuff, Natterers, Drug Victim live at The Junction, Plymouth
• Natterers, *Toxic Care* 7"

Ryan Nichols

1. Graduating from Cal State Fullerton
2. Slowdive, Self-titled LP
3. Timber Timbre, *Sincerely, Future Pollution* LP
4. Radioactivity and Fury at Diego's in Santa Ana
5. David Sedaris, *Naked* (book)

Sal Lucci

1. Citizen Blast Kane, *Straight to Videodisc* LP
2. US Weekly, Self-titled LP
3. Wild Billy Childish, *"I Remember..."* LP
4. Super Thief, live
5. Borzoi, *Surrender the Farm* EP

Sean Arenas

• Songs For Moms, *Rivers* 12"EP
• Xetas, *The Tower* LP
• Lost Balloons, *Hey Summer* CD
• Natural Sway, *Sweet Life* digital
• Fan Fiction, *Fort Anxious* digital

Sean Koepenick

I Would Like New Records From
1. The Riptides
2. Chinese Telephones
3. Fear Of Lipstick
4. Be My Doppelganger
5. Psyched to Die

Tim Brooks

• Gulag Beach, *Apocalyptic Beats*
• Fit For Abuse, EPs
• Cock Sparrer, *Forever*
• Batlle Ruins,live
• Bad Sam, *Bring Me The Head Of...* LP

Toby Tober

Top 5 Movies I Have Recently Enjoyed
1. *My Entire High School Sinking into the Sea*
2. *Too Late*
3. *Patriot*
(the series, not Mel's movie)
4. *Colossal*
5. *I Don't Feel at Home in This World Anymore*

Todd Taylor

• *The Mercy of the Tide*, Keith Rosson (book)
• Globs, *Do You Feel Weird* tie with Lost Balloons, *Hey Summer* LP
• Midnite Snaxxx, Maniac, Die Group, live down the street
• Radioactivity, Bad Sports, Maniac, and Sweet Reaper live at the Redwood
• *Typical Girls*, Vols 1 and 2
• Pressing On, *Future* 7"

RECORD REVIEWS

For maximum results, punch a fucking Nazi after you listen to this.

–Juan Espinosa

CAVE STATE / CONCUSSIVE, Split 7"

45 ADAPTERS: *They Call It Justice:* 7"
Rousing oi from Brooklyn with a black frontman, a ton of shambolic energy, and thoughtful political lyrics. Side A is about how courts force plea bargains on underprivileged defendants, bypassing the right to a fair trial. The B-Side is a 1-2 punch to the face of plastic consumer culture. All too often, street punk can have a tedious, conservative, check-all-the-boxes feel. 45 Adapters break this stereotype by bringing heartfelt energy and a genuine perspective to the table. –Chris Terry (Pirates Press)

ABOLITIONIST: *The Pinnacle:* EP
I hear traces of mid-to-late '80s DC hardcore influences here, but by and large, Abolitionist are Abolitionist. Smart lyrics that address alienation, ecology, and more are back with a solid wall of sound that takes the room over. The guitar has a nice crunch that adds to the solid thumping the whole band delivers in each song. By the time you have read this review they may have played your town. Go see them, should the chance arise. –Matt Average (1859)

ABRISS: Self-titled: LP
I do not postulate lightly… is there a German Crudos? A perfect blend of thrashing punk and boiling political hardcore blood, a slice of humor, some butt-rumbling pop-mosh breakdowns, all wrapped up in sixty second songs. There are two fundamental challenges with this release: the lack of translation from German on the lyric sheet and the fact that all fourteen tracks fit on one side of the LP. Give me more! Track this down. –Matt Seward (Spastic Fantastic, spasticfantastic.de)

ALMEIDA, LÊ: *Todas as Brisas:* LP
This is probably the best thing I have heard in months, if not longer. These Brazilians have a really good lo-fi DIY psych pop thing happening. Starts off sounding like a lazy version of something that coulda been on *Slanted and Enchanted* or a Sarah Records 7", without the sappiness but with some good headiness. That sound carries on and holds up throughout the LP. The vocals have a great ethereal airiness to them, and the lyrics are in Portuguese, which adds a little to the wraithlike quality of the vocals (at least to a monolingual like myself). The lyrics are printed in Portuguese and English on the lyric sheet, but I couldn't be drawn away from listening to this one. –Vincent (IFB / Transfusão Noise)

ALTERED STATE: Self-titled: CS
All of a sudden Denver has this raging and inspiring hardcore punk scene happening. Altered State are the newest and off to a killer start. Five songs of badass mid to fast tempo hardcore punk in roughly five minutes makes for a fantastic demo that is easy to just play over and over again. The band is fronted by Brandee Castillo, who also plays guitar in Denver ragers Sin Cave. Great lyrics and just the type of snotty punk vocal that I prefer hardcore bands to have. The guitar tone is nearly perfect and the rhythm section is top notch already. Cannot wait to see where this band goes as their live show already blows away this recording. –Mike Frame (alteredstatehc.bandcamp.com)

ANARCHISTWOOD: *The Nasty Album:* LP
What the fuck is this? Weirdo hippy anarchist art punk from the U.K., like a psychotic mix of Crass, Gang Of Four, and Frank Zappa—weird squeaks and bleeps, manic time signatures, and a garbled, strange message. The pictures online of the main guy plus supporting band has them all dressed up in costumes with him wriggling and writhing into the crowd. This is the sound and vision of my absolute worst nightmare. You know when the CIA use torture, they blast high pitch sounds to confuse the detainees? Well, if they used this, I'd sing like a fucking canary. Un-fucking believably terrible. –Tim Brooks (Ex Gratia)

BABE WAVES: *Horizon Lines:* CD
This new EP from Bellingham, Wash.'s Babe Waves is everything you hope still exists in small, supportive DIY scenes that are tucked in tiny corners of the country. Playing around with genre (or not giving a shit about it in the first place), *Horizon Lines* blends the best parts of dissonant post-hardcore, assertive queercore, and anthem-y basement punk. It's just very good. In the hands of three musicians who seem to be experimenting with an admirable combination of risk and care, songs like "Where Is the Line" and "Generation Gaslight" grapple with the political commitments of punk in such an earnest way that it would be silly to get defensive over it. This is a promising EP from a band that is keeping alive not just the sound but the spirit. –Theresa W. (Self-released)

BAD BREEDING: *Divide:* LP
Bad Breeding hail from the U.K. and I suppose that's a good a place as any to trace their influences. Anarcho punk is the template but this record is far from being straight forward. The bright spots quickly lose their shine in a wall of discordant guitar noise, lurching drum beats, and cathartic vocals. If Nick Blinko started a band with folks from Icons Of Filth, Whitehouse, and Conflict but none of the members knew each other, then this might have been the result. There's a well-written manifesto included if you're just as sick and tired of the lies and bullshit we're being fed both here in the States and across the pond and need some fodder. –Juan Espinosa (Iron Lung)

BAD SAM: *Bring Me the Head of…:* LP/CD
Out of the myriad punk vocalists I've heard, Dean Beddis remains one of the most distinctive and easily recognizable. From his days fronting Cowboy Killers through to Bad Sam, it is impossible to confuse him with anyone else. Some of that quality comes from me having known him for over thirty years—thus being accustomed to his vocal tone from those early days—but even without that, it's hard to see how it would be to forget his voice. Bad Sam's third album finds the band with a noticeably more imposing and combative sound than on previous releases and this is emphasized on the four tracks off the *Newport Hotel* album which have been re-recorded and now kick even more ass. In the words of the man himself, they have "more bollox speed and bits and bobs," and I will testify to that. This reminds me of the D.O.A. and Jello Biafra collaboration but with a more succinct approach to lyrical content. –Rich Cocksedge (Self-released, kriminalgood@gmail.com)

BAD SLEEP: Self-tilted: EP
How could you possibly go wrong with a release from both Rumbletowne and Get Better Records? I'm a big fan of nearly the entire output of both labels and Bad Sleep is certainly no exception. This three piece out of Olympia, Wash. steadfastly carry the torch of that RVIVR brand of pop punk—the kind that pushes the agenda of inclusion, neatly packaged in melodic and raucous tunes. I hesitate to call them sloppy as it carries negative connotations, but I really mean it in more of the loose playing style of the musicians who are absolutely competent at their instruments. Comparisons in the wheelhouse of Benny The Jet Rodriguez, Lipstick Homicide, and This Is My Fist! come to mind. Songs are largely about relationships, as though plucked from an angsty composition notebook full of regrets but with enough distance and maturity to have come out on the other side of hurt. A sampling of their lyrics that really struck me are, "I've calculated again and again / You don't add up 'cus I'm subtracting" ("Subtracting"), and "I lost your number / All I know are dial tones / Now I don't think about you when I'm alone" ("Don't Care"). It's beautiful, smart, dancey punk and I love everything about it. –Kayla Greet (Rumbletowne / Get Better)

BALLOON FLIGHTS: *Staten Island:* LP
Anthem-heavy pop punk along the same trajectories as RVIVR, Latterman, et al. There's definitely a strong Hüsker Dü/Replacements vibe in these songs. The choruses drop with such loud statements of purpose, each built up in a cathartic crescendo. The closest sonic comparison that springs to mind is mid-career Superchunk. It has the same indie sensibilities, with a similar punk swagger. Pretty good record. I particularly recommend the track "Josh Fury." –Bryan Static (No Tomorrow / Torreznetes / Kids Don't Follow / Rufus Recordings)

BASTARDS OF FATE: *Suck the Light Out / Way Else:* 2 x LP
To call this "all over the map" is to understate things a bit. Its core, as far as I can tell, is prime '70s art rock. From there they delve into a mélange of wildly contradictory subgenre and sub-strata, often at the same time: poppy yet dissonant, catchy yet impenetrably dense, enticing yet caustic. One second you think you're listening to Roxy Music, and the next the singer sounds like he's channeling his inner Muppet. And yet, it's all deftly executed by a band that knows its way around what seems to be everything. One big, gloriously sloppy and schizophrenic mess this is. Huge thumbs up from this corner. –Jimmy Alvarado (HHBTM)

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BASTARDS OF FATE:
***Suck the Light Out / Way Else:* 2 x LP**
This is the most amount of music that I have the least amount of words for. Not only did I get this full length record of new material, but it came with a second full length of demos spanning their whole career. Now, having never heard this band before, I can't very well comment on the demo versions of songs that have found their home on other records. However, I can talk about the synth-heavy fever dream that is *Suck the Light Out*. There's a lot of controlled chaos on this record—in a way that I really don't know how to describe. Side A starts out with church bells that fade into tambourine and keyboards that sound equal parts sci-fi, art rock, and fantasy. Frontperson Doug Cheatwood has this larger-than-life voice that I just can't put my finger on, but my gut wants to compare it to Dan Vanian (The Damned) and Danny Elfman (Oingo Boingo). Every song on this record is like a grab bag of audio samples. There's really no telling what twists and turns it's going to take, but count on it being a wild ride. Initially, I was so confused by it that I didn't like it, but after spin three it's really growing on me. –Kayla Greet (Happy Happy Birthday To Me)

BEATNIKS: Self-titled: EP
Gawwwwdddd... This is fuggin' good! This makes me believe in all that is good about punk rock. The opener, their anthem, "Beatnik Theme," lays out their reason for existence in a mid-tempo assault. "Broken Ear" is brilliant with the clipped vocals that become more intelligible as the song progresses. When I listen to this record, I'm reminded of King Vidiot from the movie *Joysticks*, when he goes to Joe Don Baker's house kicking over furniture and eating a houseplant. Go rent the movie after getting this record to see what I mean. If you like Lumpy Records, Total Punk, and the *We're Loud* comp (and who doesn't?) then seek this one out. –Matt Average (Neck Chop)

BEHAVIOR: *Bitter Bitter:* LP
Minimal, pissed, angular, anxious, art punk. In the vein of Slint, Shellac, Ought, Television, and '70s CBGB's scene. Art punks unite and take over. –Ryan Nichols (Iron Lung)

BETON: *Konsky Kokot:* CD
Ripping metallic crust. It's evident this Slovakian combo has been around for quite some time. Crystal-clear production and tight as nails. Not the same Total Punk label from Orlando, but this band is totally, one hundred percent punk. That's for sure. –Steve Adamyk (Total Punk)

BLACK ABBA: *Lost Dog:* 7"
New Orleans-based '70s throwback supergroup Black Abba—or Bl'abba if you're in a hurry—are the unholy union of Black Sabbath and ABBA, in spirit if not in reality. Formed by members of Trampoline Team, Gary Wrong Group, Buck Biloxi And The Fucks, and the head of Pelican Pow Wow Records, Sarah Mason, the band offer up two short tracks on this 7" single: "Lost Dog" and "The Manager." The former features shouted female vocals and appropriately grimy production. The bulk of the instrumentation sinks down into the song's general chaos save for an exceptionally unnerving synth line that floats almost too high in the mix, provoking a brain-scrambling nausea that reads as an intentional—but sort of mean—stylistic choice. "The Manager" is an effective B side, wading through more solid riffs and grooves that help you shake off the "Lost Dog" synth-induced heebie-jeebies. A snarky sendup of shitty, abusive producers and managers who try to control the sound, aesthetic, and behavior of the bands they work for, the track echoes Black Abba's rebellious feminine power and apparent commitment to a DIY ethos. Clocking in at three-and-a-half minutes in total, the *Lost Dog* 7" definitely isn't a meal unto itself, but it functions perfectly as an amuse-bouche, introducing the not-terribly-prolific band to new listeners and leaving them hungry for more. –Kelley O'Death (Total Punk)

BLACK HELICOPTER:
***Everything Is Forever:* 12" EP**
Finally! The answer to the question no one asked: what do you get if you mix the equivalent of the talentless Strokes with the dreary pretentiousness of Oasis? Nice try masquerading four unremarkable songs with elaborately unnecessary packaging: a ridiculously thick piece of wood with the band's name and album title branded (yes, like the frat boys do on their arms) onto the cover. No matter how much you polish it, a turd is still a fucking turd. –Juan Espinosa (Limited Appeal)

BLACK HELICOPTER:
***Everything Is Forever:* 12" EP**
This Boston-based quartet includes a member of Green Magnet School, who released material with Sub Pop in the early '90s. Thus, Black Helicopter ain't no spring chickens. However, unlike the sound of their other acts (members also have experience with Kudgel and Windmills By The Ocean) Black Helicopter sounds more post-punk and direct. Each of the songs has its own personality: "And I > Drive at Night" is darker and introspective while "Not Kewl Who" has a slow, melodic tempo similar to something from a high school dance. The first track on the B side, "Show of Hams," has a poppy, shuffling tempo and the second track is a seven minute instrumental that ranges from gentle to crashing in its indie rock intensity. This is one of those things that is a tease—it's good, but not quite enough material for me to determine if Black Helicopter shot their load on this short release or has what it takes to be a fantastic act. Things look promising, though. –Kurt Morris (Limited Appeal)

BRAIN BAGZ: *God Hates Bagz:* 7" EP
Greasy, smudged-out psych garage, Brain Bagz pours it on thick with

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unapologetic Cramps swagger and wet, nasty sass. "No Taste for Thriller" has a straight-up ridiculous amount of lo-fi fuzz with weirdo sax noise to back it up. It's delicious, hot trash. Both "Eyes of Night" and "Static Static" have a knuckle-dragging rock'n'roll throb. God might hate Bagz, but the devil fucking loves it. –Camylle Reynolds (Sex Tape, sextaperecords.com)

BUCK BILOXI: *Hollow Earth:* 7"
Buck Biloxi is a shining star in lo-fi punk. The back catalogue is infectious. I find myself involuntarily singing "I'm Gonna Hit You with a Brick" and "Shut the Fuck Up" on a regular basis. Flat delivery, catchy punkness, and ratty, distorted guitar has made Buck Biloxi the gold standard. Since I'm such a fan, I'll say if you didn't like it before, this is more of the same. But I can't get enough of it. This single also breaks new ground by not selling out and assigning names to the songs. Always excellent. –Billups Allen (Holotrash)

BURNING ITCH: *Intergalactic Asshat:* LP
Nice little racket these fellas are whipping up here. If Ramonesy garage punk is your thing, this platter delivers in metric buttloads. Amps are buzzing, set to eleven, and everything is in the red. Glorious and very recommended. –Garrett Barnwell (Heel Turn)

BUZZ RODEO: *Combine:* LP/CD
The first two tracks, "Cheap Trick" and "Jordan Walk", whether intentionally or not, help cement my conviction that Big Black has influenced this German trio of noise mongers—the connections to those songs being Big Black's Cheap Trick cover and its own track "Jordan, Minnesota." Strengthening my belief that the Chicago trio has helped shape what Buzz Rodeo is doing is Ralph Schaarschmidt, who is the perfect vocal double for Steve Albini. The one difference is that instead of employing a drum machine, Buzz Rodeo uses a human, offering up a more expansive form of battery. As a keen Big Black fan, this is a no brainer for me, and was money well spent, despite the fact I also received a review copy days before my purchased copy arrived. –Rich Cocksedge (Antena Krzyku, sklep@antenakrzyku.pl, antenakrzyku.pl)

CANDY: Demo: CS
Fast, tight, and loud. It's raucous hardcore that learned the best lessons from post-punk and metal and stripped them down to bite-sized songs. This tape is one of the best arguments for hardcore that I've heard in recent years: seven songs that don't outstay their welcome with a diverse palette of sounds to carry it through the recording. If these guys were local to me, I'd be sure to catch them every chance I could. Oh, wait, Vancouver is only a three-hour drive. –Bryan Static (Self-released)

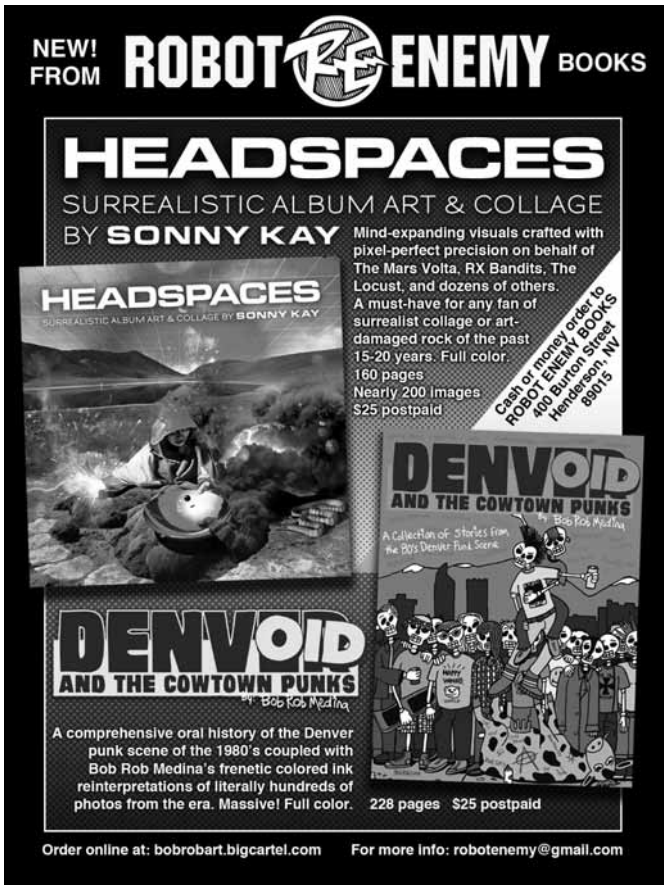
CAVE STATE / CONCUSSIVE: Split: 7"
L.A.'s Cave State has quickly become the most recognizable name of the current crop of powerviolence bands. Their tutelage consists mainly of a strict diet of Crossed Out and Excruciating Terror, so while their offerings aren't exactly game changers you could definitely do worse. Concussive is from the East Bay but don't get it twisted: AFI they ain't. They play relentless and manic powerviolence, flirting with noise and power electronics that don't sound like everyone else (Bastard Noise clones). Much like Cave State, their sound borrows heavily from the first and second wave powerviolence bands but I'm picking up a trace of Mellow Harsher's sheer, brutal force and Suppression's total disregard for conventionalism. For my money, Concussive clearly comes out on top of this split but Cave State is nothing to scoff at. For maximum results, punch a fucking Nazi after you listen to this. –Juan Espinosa (To Live A Lie)

CAYETANA: *New Kind of Normal:* CD
"I always seem to doubt how everyone seems to have it all figured out." No surprise at all that it looks like Cayetana has, once again, put out the album of the year. Augusta Koch is a world-class songwriter and has gotten even better as a lyricist here. The addition of backing vocals is a welcome surprise as well. Improved musicianship will either kill a band or make it better and the chops picked up from massive touring have strengthened this band. Cayetana and *New Kind of Normal* are simply astonishing. Even a little "maturity" doesn't dampen—but rather deepens—the overall result, making for a second classic album. –Mike Frame (Plum, cayetana.limitedrun.com)

C.H.E.W.: Self-titled: 7"
Yes. That is what I said as soon as "Neuroleptics" kicked off my introduction to this band and record. It's also what my listening partner said when track three, "Black Sheep," started. A little d-beat, a little post-punk, all great. If you miss Witch Hunt and you like to dance, you should definitely just get this. –Nicole X (Neck Chop)

CHERRIES, THE: *Self-titled 2:* CD
If I see that something is on Jigsaw Records, I know I will at least like it if not completely love it. Kind of a little brother-style label to Slumberland, Jigsaw excels at finding lo-fi, indie pop, twee, and garage pop bands to release. The Cherries are no exception to the rule with their surfy, garage pop sounds that would be right at home on a Burger cassette. Fans of anything that Ty Segall has done or most of the Hozac Records catalog would likely really go for The Cherries in a big way. –Mike Frame (Jigsaw)

CLITERATI: Self-titled: 7"
Thank you, Cliterati, both for your obscenely excellent name and your exceedingly awesome songs. These gals ('n' dude) straddle the lines of d-beat and hardcore, wrecking their way through five fiercely compact cuts. Though each song on my newfound favorite 7" absolutely rules, the song "Make America Hate Again"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in particular perfectly encapsulates my frustration with the current administration. Really though, it doesn't get much better than Cliterati, so buy this 7"! And if you can't afford it, then cancel your freakin' Netflix subscription, fool! –Simone Carter (Tankcrimes, tankcrimes.com)

CLOWNS: *Lucid Again:* LP/CD
I saw Australia's Clowns play a few weeks ago and was in awe at the flying hair, dripping sweat, and constant movement of vocalist Stevie Williams. Despite there being four other band members, it was nigh on impossible to pull my eyes away from him. Much like Zach Quinn of Pears, his performance was visceral and exciting. *Lucid Again* displays a band treading new pastures, as lengthier songs— verging on Fucked Up territory—temper the feverish offerings found on previous releases. This is demonstrated by the album containing five fewer tracks than its predecessor, although *Bad Blood* did include the eleven-minute "Human Terror," which the band has clearly built upon here. *Lucid Again* has the sense of being a defining moment for Clowns yet does not hint at a band about to reach a plateau. –Rich Cocksedge (Poison City)

COCK SPARRER: *Every Step of the Way:* Flexi 7"
Never have I been so excited to get a record in my mitts for review. After seeing Cock Sparrer live in Montreal last November, something occurred to me: they might be the greatest band in whole still playing. They're still so incredible, it's barely fathomable. Without seeing them in the flesh, one can't really grasp what an experience it is to catch them. It makes you ask yourself questions, like: "Shit, do I love street punk *this* much? Should I reassess the last twenty years of my life musically?" I've dug this band for a really, really long time. There's a copy of the live album *Running Riot across the USA* in my collection and I recall buying it (more or less) the week in came out, back in 2000. They're—quite simply put—a perfect band. If anything, they're better now than ever. In case you're wondering, the new LP won't disappoint you. A lot of vintage bands still kicking will, but not this one. "Every Step of the Way" is as classic as you'd expect, even with the acoustic guitar. A simple taste of England's glory. –Steve Adamyk (Pirates Press)

COCK SPARRER: *Forever:* LP
What can be said about the mighty Sparrer? Forty years of service and still banging out classic albums. This LP is as good as any that have come before (apart from the flawless *Shock Troops* that can't be beaten). Anthemic pub punk asking for nothing more than a fist and a pint glass waved in the air. Thanks to Skippy at Pirates Press reissuing all their old gear and bringing out their new records, they have had somewhat of a well-deserved second wind over the past ten years. Songs about yer mates, family, and standing up for what you believe get the blood flowing. Somehow they embody the true spirit of punk rock: fun, defiance, and a good bloody time. I went in apprehensive, like when I watch the champ going in for another title defense: something has to give sometime, right? Not this time, people. The champ still got it and this LP is a punk rock clinic. Bravo. Couldn't wish it on better bunch of chaps. Now get this onto your record player before I give you a good slap. –Tim Brooks (Pirates Press)

COCK SPARRER: *Forever:* CD/LP
Even though I got the vinyl too, the CD has four bonus songs. Our readers deserve nothing less than to get the whole enchilada on this release. I'm not shocked, but this is a damn good album. They have always been on top of their game live, but their newer material was a wildcard until now. Agile rhythms, singalong choruses, and positive lyrics are the name of the game with Cock Sparrer. You get all that and more on *Forever*. "Every Step of the Way" is the lead-off single here, but that may not be the best of the bunch. For the bonus extras, my pick is "You Lost the War." This is fantastic record, so don't sleep on this one. It will look perfect next to your copy of *Shock Troops*. –Sean Koepenick (Pirates Press, piratespressrecords.com)

COMPOSITE: *Artemisia:* 7" EP
Dark/gothy punk is pretty much all I want to listen to these days and Oakland's Composite is giving it to me in spades. Every aspect is so good—the guitars both swirl and riff, the vocals are some of the best and most consistent I've heard in a while, and the rhythm section does an excellent job of balancing between complementing what is happening and taking the spotlight when appropriate. Composite is a rare case in which the live show blows the already-great recording out of the water. I mean if you like post-punk or gothy stuff, this is almost certainly for you. –Nicole X (Self-released, compositeoakland@gmail.com)

CONNOISSEUR: *Over the Edge:* LP
The boys from Oakland's Connoisseur love to smoke weed. With song titles like "The Stoning," "Weeding out the Weak," and "Boulevard of Broken Bongs," the message is not subtle. This is not coded language a la *Puff the Magic Dragon* to try and sneak past your mom's critical eye. What makes *Over the Edge* a cool album is not its worship of the sweet leaf. There are plenty of better albums that already do that. (Sleep's *Dopesmoker* or Peter Tosh's *Legalize It*, et cetera.) *Over the Edge* makes its mark by packing heavy stoner metal riffs and screaming vocals into songs that average a Ramones-worthy sixty-one seconds a piece. (Yes, I did the math.) Connoisseur has managed to take songs that sound like High On Fire's brand of stoner-sludge metal and package them into short, sharp punk-length jams. It makes for a

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fun listen, whether you are sober, high, or somewhere in between. –Jon Mule (Tankcrimes, tankcrimes.com)

ČORNA KRUŠWA: Self-titled: EP
If the Estranged or Autistic Youth moved to Berlin and learned German. One of their song titles is an emoji but I won't hold that against them because the songs are really fucking good. When you write songs that don't make me want to sharpen a pencil and stick it in my ears, well then you can get away with stupid shit like that. –Juan Espinosa (Mamma Leone / Phantom)

CREEPS, THEE: *Grave Pop:* CS EP
Not to be confused with The Creeps from Ottawa (or any other "Creeps" band), this Brooklyn gang trashes out some pretty great tunes, with equal elements of punk and garage. A couple of the tunes are bluesy-er than others, but it's not far from your modern day Burger-fare, genre wise (though the tunes are above average for sure). "Personal Frankenstein" is the hit. They keep good company on this label with dudes like The Jeanies. Great stuff. –Steve Adamyk (King Pizza)

CROOKED BANGS: *II:* LP
Crooked Bangs is a wonderful enigma. I've seen them once and their live show was great. I walked away thinking of them as being more along the lines of dark post-punk. But! When I put on the LP a lot of grunge and some metal came out. I kept hearing spots that reminded me of L7. This is wonderful and a compliment because I love all of the above. If you want some really current noisy post-punk with more grunge female vocals, Crooked Bangs will be that. Check out track two, "Rabbit Hole," first if you need a sample. –Nicole X (Nervous Intent)

CROSS CLASS: *Reflection:* CS
Sacramento hardcore punks Cross Class slay with six new songs in the ill-tempered vein of Blazing Eye and S.H.I.T. I have to say that they've gotten tighter and tougher after their last release, *Minimum Rage*. Politically driven lyrics and fed-the-fuck-up, almost anguished, throat-ripping vocals set the tone of uneasiness and dissatisfaction. This shit will pummel the compliancy out of you. Word has it they have more to come. –Camylle Reynolds (Self-released, crossclass.bandcamp.com)

DANNY BURK & THE INVADERS: *"A'int Going Nowhere" b/w "Till I'm Sure": 7"*
This is a reissue of a single originally released in 1966 that I was completely unfamiliar with, but upon first listen it won me over instantly. The A-side is an R&B garage rock stomper and worth the price of admission alone, sounding like something you would only be familiar with from a Crypt Records or *Nuggets* compilation, snotty and infectious. Flipping it over, the B-side is more of a British Invasion-influenced style tune but still has some teeth behind it. The unlikeliest of reissues is the kind of obscure single that I would hear on some obscure '60s garage rock compilation and always hope to find, but never would. –Mark Twistworthy (Certified PR, certifiedprrecords.com)

DAUÐYFLIN: *Ofbeldi:* LP
Quintessential Iron Lung, Icelandic punks Dauðyflin rips with dark, heavy, distorted hardcore discourse. Mid-tempo flow holds steady throughout with throat-shredding vocals adding to the acrid thrash. Fierce femme vocals at times reminded me of Rakta's chaotic psych distortion. Cover and insert art is perfection. –Camylle Reynolds (Iron Lung)

DEADBEAT / BOAK: Split: 7"
Putting this on—Deadbeat (Los Angeles) and Boak (Aberdeen, U.K.)—involved forcing a hole in my personal brick wall which automatically goes up when new powerviolence/grindcore/fastcore blips on my radar. That being said, Deadbeat's twenty-four second opener, "Enemy," grew on me as did Boak's second track on side B, "Bath Salts." The former is just short enough to get it and just long enough that you don't feel cheated out of something, while the latter suddenly gets just the tiniest bit sludgy about a minute in. Again, just enough to satiate and make sure you don't walk away feeling empty. –Nicole X (To Live A Lie)

DEATHRAID:
***The Year the Earth Strikes Back:* LP**
Deathraid crush it every single time. They take the d-beat/Motörhead sound and make some slight adjustments here and there to make it their own: blazing guitars, rapid-fire drumming, and rumbling bass from the lower depths of hell, topped with dry, throaty vocals. The opening to "No Company" is epic fist-pumping material. The song itself is a mid-tempo lumbering giant that takes over the room when it comes on. "Toadeater" spins off at a torrential pace that eases up just slightly during the chorus. "I Am No One" is inspired by *The Exorcist* with lyrics taken from dialogue in the movie. This is a pretty solid listen the whole way through. I am of the opinion that their entire discography should be part of your life. –Matt Average (Agipunk, info@agipunk.com)

DESPISE YOU / COKE BUST: Split: 7"
L.A. by way of Inglewood's own powerviolence vets Despise You return with all new material since their 2015 7" *All Your Majestic Bullshit*. Middle age hasn't slowed down the core duo of Chris Elder and Phil Vera, the band's two longest running members since 1993. Joined by their fierce co-vocalist and hype woman Cynthia Nishi (formerly of Gasp, another staple Los Angeles-based experimental powerviolence band) and a couple of recruits on bass and drums, the band devastates ear drums once again with five pulverizing blasts of their patented west side "power-thrash" that holds up as much, if not more than, any of their previous recordings. Songs about dead friends, sketchy fucks you used to

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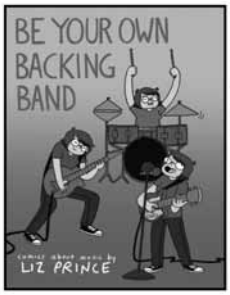

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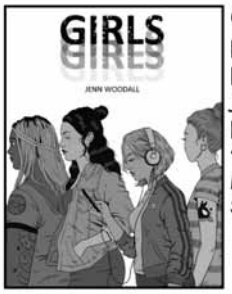

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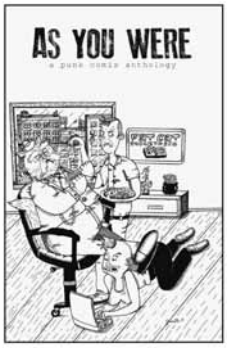

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call "friend," and living just for dying. On their side of the split, DC's Coke Bust pillaging fury brings to mind the whirlwind thrash of Deep Wound and Siege. I had the pleasure of seeing these maniacs blow the roof off of Chuco's Justice Center here in Inglewood back in 2009 so it's encouraging to hear that eight years later their intensity remains intact. Fun fact: if you carefully sharpen the edges of this record, it serves a dual purpose as an instrument to cut posers with. –Juan Espinosa (To Live A Lie)

DIALYSIS: *Pretty Men:* CD
Naked City-esque grindcore. Featuring a saxophone as the band megastar. I'm going to plead disinterest in this one. I could offer a proper review, but it would be like an architect reviewing an anthill. I am not prepared nor qualified to really break apart the sonic assaults held within. What I do hear is anger and droning noises, all played very fast and at the same time. By some definitions this might be considered music, but only in loose discussions surrounding the topic. I'll chalk it up to bafflement. –Bryan Static (Hex)

DIFERENT!: *Here in Buenos Aires:* 12"
The only problem with one-sided releases is that I usually find myself bemoaning the fact that I feel short changed, more so if I like the band. That's definitely the case here as Brazilian band Diferent! offers up half a dozen choice cuts of surf-tinged punk rock when I would have preferred double that amount, such is the quality of its music. Nevertheless, I will have to make do with this record until a full length comes along. –Rich Cocksedge (Crapoulet, cool@crapoulet.fr, crapoulet.fr)

DIKLOUD: *II:* LP
Dikloud sings mostly in German and I'm praying the lyrics are great or even good, because, heaven help me, I like this melodic hardcore LP. Mostly I like it for the ways it drifts away from hardcore—into samples of seagulls hovering around the beach, or clean guitar interludes, or gnarly Jehu-like songs—but also for the way the most straightforward songs don't feel clichéd. When's the last time you heard a hardcore record that had peaks and valleys? That seemed to have a natural dramatic structure? This is clearly a well thought-out, aesthetically strong statement of an album (the record includes a large sealed envelope full of lyric sheets and xeroxed photos, basically a dossier). If anyone can translate what that statement is into English, I'd very much appreciate it. –Matt Werts (Mamma Leone, mammaleone.org / Phantom, phantomrecords.blogspot.com / Kalt Am Kopf / Knebel Label)

DINOSAUR LOVE: *The Gospel:* CD
Okay, so this is a concept album about the prehistoric conflict between noble dinosaurs and reptilian invaders on the supercontinent Pangea, which, as we all know, resulted in the creation of shapeshifting dinosaur-reptilian hybrids and the birth of… Jesusaurus-Rex… and… something about Dino-Illuminati? And a lot of other characters? Fuck, I don't know, I can't do this. There's just a lot going on in this universe, including, like, secret agent dinosaurs at some point. The CD comes with a lyric booklet that includes The 5 Commandments of Our Lord and Savior Jesusaurus-Rex. Musically, the album wavers between Mischief Brew-esque folk punk, bluesy lo-fi rock, and general joke band garbage. I have no further explanation for this. –Indiana Laub (Related)

DIRECT HIT!: *Domesplitter:* CD
Pretty much exactly as the title promises, Direct Hit!'s debut relentlessly pummels lightnin' fast, anthemic pop punk directly into your dome. Slick production and proficient instrumentation lend a hand to the CD's ten catchy tracks. Listening to *Domesplitter* made me remember why I fell in love with punk rock in middle school, but that's not to say it's stale. Direct Hit!'s imaginative riffs, fun lyrics, and singalong-style choruses make other pop punk bands pale in comparison— including, but not limited to, my next door neighbors' shitty band. –Simone Carter (Fat)

DIRTY NIL, THE: *Minimum R&B:* LP
I don't know what it is about America's hat, but most Canadian bands are *just* out of reach for me. And I don't mean that they're unattainable—just that, with few exceptions, they don't enter my scope of listening selection very often. So, yes, for several months I've heard accolades of The Dirty Nil shouted from the roofs of punk houses echoing around my sphere of influence. Sadly, yet fortunately, it took *Minimum R&B* showing up in my review pile to give them a go. They're a tightrope walk between all-out rock'n'roll of bands like The Hunches and Dead Boys, yet also hone a sweetness in their blown-out vocals like toyGuitar's Jack Dalrymple if he had more grit in his throat. I hate to make the sort of obvious comparison to Pears, but it's true. They're able to take hardcore aggression and belt it out half-life by half-life until it's compressed into an alt rock band with punk ideologies plus a dash of twang and glitter. And if that's the direction Fat is going these days, I'm in. "Don't wilt before you bloom / Cus you are fucking up young" are words of wisdom that every young punk needs to heed, and I hope The Dirty Nil have the foresight and determination to stay on the enlightened side of their advice. Bloom long and hard, please. –Kayla Greet (Fat)

DOGS, THE: Self-titled: 7"
Another classic among classics, The Dogs "Slash Your Face" is an early punk swinger appearing on Killed By Death Number One after years of swimming in collector obscurity. It's a KBD rocker of the highest degree. Here is another of what Last Laugh does best: making rare singles affordably available again. This is pretty essential

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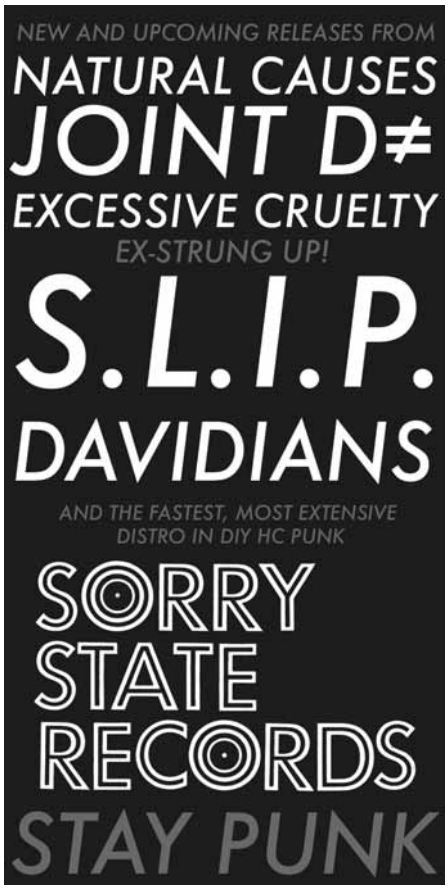

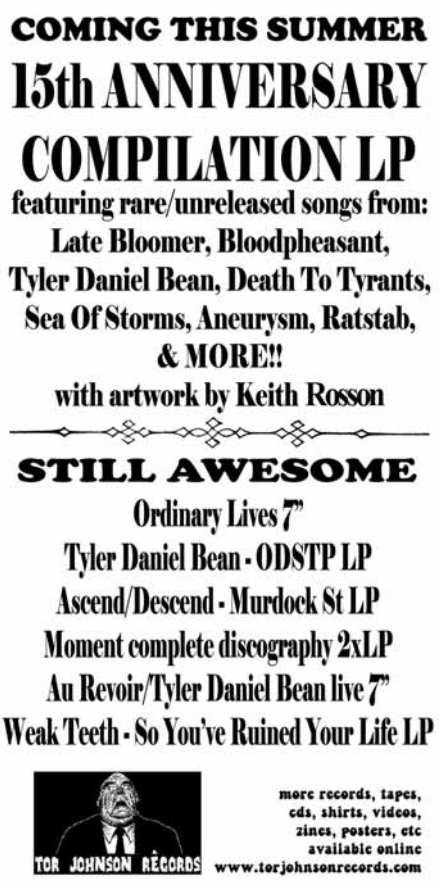

if you're always seeking more KBD, seeing as it's a reasonable price and you get the two other songs. "Fed Up" and "Are You a Boy or Are You a Girl?" are rockers worth the price. Several bootlegs and comps exist, but they're going at scarcity prices these days (unless you're into CDs, in which case you're good to go). –Billups Allen (Last Laugh)

DONOMA: *Falling Forward:* CD
If Tori Amos fronted Gogol Bordello then you might get an idea of what this album sounds like. I stuck it out until the end because this magazine that you are reading would expect no less. There is a man with no shirt on the cover. He has jumped off a skyscraper and is about to meet an early demise. I am guessing he just played this on his stereo? –Sean Koepenick (Self-released, donomatribe.com)

DOPAMINES, THE: *Tales of Interest:* LP
This record brought me back to the first time I heard of this band, when I got a CD-R of their first record to review, all the way back in 2008. Having never heard of them, I wasn't expecting too much. Needless to say, I was pleasantly surprised. I was lucky enough to catch them live a couple times afterwards—once at Insubordination Fest, where their performance later became immortalized on video, then a few years later in Boston at the original Starlab (since torn down). Five years after their last record, the band is back. Thankfully, they haven't lost a step with the downtime. "Common Rue" and "Heartbeaten by the Police" show the band growing as songwriters. But don't panic, they still know how to have fun. Welcome back boys, we missed you. –Sean Koepenick (Rad Girlfriend)

EASY MONEY: Self-titled: LP
Obscure power-poppers from Victoria BC active at the End of the Century (1980, duh), this collection of Easy Money's two singles and numerous practice room demos is an intriguing if uneven license to speculate on contenderships what mighta been. Although no recording data is provided, it appears that each side starts with two songs off the 1981 singles (the two A-sides start side 1 and the B-sides start side 2, nice touch, very Buzzcocks), then works its way backwards through time, devolving Easy Money from the somewhat clinical, Code Blue-ish precision of their later moments ("Getting Lost") back to their surprisingly KBD-ish roots ("Young and Overequipped"), kinda like a *March of Progress* poster in reverse and with Canadians. "No Stranger to Danger" and "It Keeps Me Living" sound like what Dirty Looks and the Neighborhoods were doing one country to the south and a continent's width over, so the potential to Do Great Things was certainly there (even though their attempts at cut-time fast stuff like "You Could Be Me" come off as so rinky-dink as to give the impression their instruments are being played by very clean mice). If they were putting out their own 45s at the time they were playing early racket like "Young and Overequipped" and the timetable accelerated to the point where the stuff that was on their singles was actually on their second album, their legacy might have been weighty indeed. As it stands, this album never sits still long enough to hold one coherent thought, but as a patchwork collection of rarities, I approve. BEST SONG: "It Keeps Me Living." BEST SONG TITLE: "Young and Overequipped." FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: Packaging includes press clippings from celebrated bastion of culture, the *Oak Bay Star.* –Rev. Nørb (Hosehead / Neon Taste)

EROTIC DEVICES: *All We Wanna Do Is Rock'n'Roll:* LP
When I worked in the video game industry, I wrote a lot of pitch documents—outlines of projects we'd like to do, written for purposes of convincing people to give us lots of their money so we could make the game described therein. Early on in my career, I was told that any good pitch document should contain a "statement of differentiation"—since videogames are rigidly categorized by genre (first-person shooter, platformer, puzzle game, et cetera.), the writer always needs to mention how their first-person shooter/platformer/puzzle game/et cetera. would be different than everybody else's first-person shooter/platformer/puzzle game/ et cetera. (though not *too* different, because god forbid the gamers be forced to contemplate new concepts). The concept of "statement of differentiation" might prove helpful to the Erotic Devices, Berliner Ramones-core purists. Their record is certainly loud enough, tight enough, and well-executed enough, but, with regards to potential statements of differentiation between them and others of their ilk, I'm truly drawing a big frickin' blank here. I mean, bands from twenty years ago who were clearly Ramones-derivative like Head and the Riverdales had numerous potential statements of differentiation (the Richies didn't have one, but they were pretty much the first ones doing it, so they didn't need one); am I too old to revel in a universe of pure form these days, or am I just missing something? Points for the excellent faux Sire Records label design, though; it's way better than my attempts at one. BEST SONG: "Baby Be My Bone." BEST SONG TITLE: "I Really Wanna Fuck." No, seriously. FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: Cover art by former *Swamp Thing* artist Rick Veitch. No, seriously. –Rev. Nørb (Wanda, wandarecords.de)

ESCALATOR HATERS: Self-titled: LP
I read recently the state of Wyoming has only two escalators in the whole state. So, certainly, if The Escalator Haters play in the U.S., look out for their Wyoming shows. The Escalator Haters self-titled album is a nice slab reminiscent of '70s U.K. punk. They sound a bit like the U.K. band Raped,

which can't be a coincidence unless "escalator hater" is a more common expression than I know. The band's U.K.-style catchiness comes across correctly and continues to sing the punk fight on "T.V. Dummy." Here they play well and complain about things. The vocals are upbeat snottiness in the vein of The Undertones. The album continues in the U.K. vein with occasional spurts of punk'n'roll influence. Nice record. –Billups Allen (Wanda, wandarecords.de)

ETC.: Demo: CS
Honestly, I don't know what's up with this band. The whole tape is less than fifteen minutes and it's not bad. That is noteworthy because the Mexico City-based "band's" bandcamp page states that they're not a band and they'll never play these songs live, they just recorded them as cheaply and lo-fi as possible to soothe anxiety. I respect that! The songs are quick jolts of garage punk and—because they are in Spanish and I don't speak Spanish—they make good background music. The first two tracks, "Vaca Sagrada" and "Inocentes," are not a bad way to spend three minutes. –Nicole X (Richter Scale)

FALL SILENT: *Cart Return:* 7"
If you were a fan of metalcore in the '90s or early '00s, especially on the West Coast, chances were good you knew Reno, Nev.'s Fall Silent. While not as familiar with the band as I am with some of their contemporaries, I was excited to check out their return release after more than a decade of silence. While the raw fury of albums like *No Strength to Suffer* and *Superstructure* are here, *Cart Return* didn't do much to move me. Never slouches in the writing or performing department—all the members of Fall Silent are superb musicians—the slick production of *Cart Return* fails to capture the grit and blistering rage of the band in their heyday. –Paul J. Comeau (Revelation)

FASTPLANTS / DANIEL WAXOFF: Split: LP
The Pat Wachter Bowl is a skate contest held annually in a suburban rednecky public park thirty minutes south of my city. While it has age brackets, the main focus of this contest is the "Over 40" category. Fastplants are a fitting soundtrack. Simple lyrics (who needs depth when you can't hear them over grinding concrete), an eighteen-year-old's attitude (plus twenty-two more years of legal drinking), and a song solely about Jeff Grosso. It rocks. It rolls. It rock and rolls over the pool lip. It's incredible. The Daniel Waxoff logo reminds me of Nuclear Assault's logo. I loved Nuclear Assault in high school. I love Nuclear Assault. Nuclear Assault. –Matt Seward (Beer City)

FATHER FIGURES, THE: *Heaving Lifting:* LP
This is the fourth Father Figures album, and it's their debut on Slope Records. They self-describe as post-punk, but I think all they mean by that is that they've attained a level of musical maturity that they didn't have when they were kids. Influenced heavily by Naked Raygun and Mission Of Burma, the intense vocals keep this record squarely in touch with its hardcore roots. The Father Figures clearly did some heavy lifting when they recorded *Heavy Lifting*, and it shows in the final product. A+, gentlemen! –Art Ettinger (Slope, sloperecords.com)

FATHER'S DAY: *Goodbye 1506:* CD
The 1506 Trunk Space is an all-ages venue in Phoenix that was open for twelve years before relocating from their Grand Avenue spot. Father's Day recorded their set at the final show to happen at the original Trunk Space, and this CD is made up of their seventeen song set list (plus intro). Father's Day is self-proclaimed "angry dad punk rock n roll." The beginning of this album started off promising with "Disney World," a song about how a dad was never going to take his kids to Disney World. I get it, Disney World is expensive and can be chaotic, and that is definitely something a dad could say. Parody is really hard to get right, and the album progressed into songs that made me cringe, such as "My Son's a Gay" and "Get in the Kitchen." After that, the song titles and lyrics kept getting worse. I understand that the band tried to be funny, but I feel like Father's Day is going about it too literally in an offensive/conservative parent sense. The lead singer even notes that people say they need to stop, and think they are a joke band (though they claim not to be), and I agree with what the critics say. This album signifies the closing of a venue, and it should also have signified the ending of this band's gimmick. –Cynthia Pinedo (Related)

FEEDERZ: *"Stealing"* b/w *"Sabotage":* 7" 45
As opposed to the cathartic DIY slop-ünd-scream of 1984's *Ever Feel Like Killing Your Boss?* album—which was a fucking *classic*, let there be no debate—this new stuff has got a pounding, drum-heavy, almost major label feel to it. Like, I've never been to Lollapalooza, do they have some kind of side stage for psychotic subversives, or is that on the main stage now? Or is that Warped Tour? I can never keep these things straight. Seriously, though—in with all the vitriol about rioting and looting and fuck the cops and the this and the that, there is a full-color picture sleeve, housing a *printed inner sleeve* (when's the last time you saw a 45 with a *printed inner sleeve?* Like, never?), housing a colored vinyl record with a full-color center label with a booming, big-money-sounding production (courtesy of Cris Kirkwood of the Meat Puppets, good work young man)—the packaging here is so opulent and my imagined per-unit cost of manufacturing this record is so high that I'm awash in a filthy sea of cognitive dissonance trying to associate this physical artifact with some manner of grassroots rebellion. I can't wrap my head around it yet. It kinda sounds

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like something for the guys who play Foetus on their college radio shows to play when they're pissed off about the government. It's interesting but I think it needs more sandpaper. BEST SONG: Either. BEST SONG TITLE: Or. FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: I met Frank Discussion's wife in Las Vegas in 2001 and she was a very sweet person. –Rev. Nørb (Slope)

FEMME KRAWALL: *Fun Im All:* 10"
First of all, this has some amazing cover art featuring various desserts blasting through space on a rocket-banana. So that sets the tone, really. This is goofy as hell and super fun, from the Star Trek-themed opener "Uhura's Disco" to the frantically escalating breakdown at the end of "Ohne Worte." It sounds like snotty, shouty riot grrrl made by a band that seems extremely fun to hang out with. Lyrics are mostly in German, so I don't know what they all are, but they're probably awesome. –Indiana Laub (Spastic Fantastic)

FIT FOR ABUSE:
***Psycho Ray Sessions:* 7" EP**
Second FFA EP of long-lost tracks by this crucial East Coast powerhouse. After Kelly left the band for the Dropkick Murphys, they got Psycho Ray to sing. This shit is almost more unhinged, sounding like Negative Approach crossed with Antidote or some shit. Fast and brutal. Seldom do people unearth forgotten recordings that are as mandatory as both of these records. Saw them blow the doors off in Boston the other week too. You're a fucking poseur if you don't own this. –Tim Brooks (Warthog Speak / Painkiller)

FIT FOR ABUSE:
***Too Little, Too Late:* 7" EP**
Long thought lost to the annals of time, unreleased FFA tracks have been unearthed. This band released a 7" in the mid-'90s (reissued as a 12" last year) then recorded sporadically 'til 2003, although only four (that's right, four) tracks ever saw the light of day. The first disk has three re-recorded tracks from the demo as well as *smokingggg* Abused and Iron Cross covers. This era featured Matt Kelly from the Dropkick Murphys singing. Ugly-as-fuck hardcore sounding like the bastard son of Poison Idea, Negative FX, and Negative Approach. As good as any record you own. –Tim Brooks (Warthog Speak / Painkiller)

F.I.T.S.: *Feeding Illness to Society:* 7"
Distinct and odd, the vocals on this French-Canadian hardcore 7" set it apart. An Australian label temporarily based in Toronto, Blow Blood Records quietly is putting out a solid roster of distinguished current bands. The tempo changes and semi-cartoonish voice aren't jarring, but instead make F.I.T.S. improbably provocative. F.I.T.S. fit in the tradition of seemingly straightforward hardcore that is weird enough to demonstrate how varied our often-dismissed subgenres can get. –Art Ettinger (Blow Blood)

FIVE THOUSAND: *Monadh:* CD-R
Mid-paced, slightly metallic punk from Scotland with anarcho leanings (Icons Of Filth, anyone?). Four tracks total, although two tracks serve as intros, so essentially it's two long songs. Profane Existence would have been all over this. The fold-out poster included says it loud and clear: fuck Jared Leto and all other punk co-opting celebrity type scum. –Juan Espinosa (Our Future)

FLEAS, THE: *Heart Breaker:* 7"
It's probably impossible to review an EP from a British punk band lead by a sax-toting female vocalist without referencing X-Ray Spex. The best thing about The Fleas is that they pull it off without being crushed under the weight of that reference. The guitar slashes with piercing treble of early U.K. recordings but structure and chord progression from a more modern school of songwriting. However, it's Emily's voice and sax that—while similar to Poly's—has the strength of delivery and attitude that has kept this record in heavy rotation. –Matt Seward (Grow Your Own)

FRENCH VANILLA: Self-titled: LP
French Vanilla's sound is well crafted, quirky, and danceable post-punk with the heaviest dose of the Slits. Vocals are sultry and deep but Sally Spitz's range can take it to the most deliciously uncomfortable shrill on a whim. Lyrics are unapologetically feminist, about the (at times) awkward reality and glory of womanhood, with "Carrie"—a song about a young girl getting her period—being one of my favorite songs on the LP. It's all very weird and luscious. –Camylle Reynolds (Danger Collective)

FRENCH VANILLA: Self-titled: CD
L.A.'s French Vanilla gives me a lot of electropop vibes. Their post-punk feminist sound reminds me of Le Tigre meets Bratmobile with a saxophone. Dance-inducing bass lines, riffing guitar chords, and the ever-present saxophone back up lead singer Sally Spitz's haunting and wailing vocals. This album has several saxophone-heavy songs, especially "Carrie," a song influenced by the star of the cult horror film. Some of the topics on this album cover feminism, friendship, and global warming. "Social Trappings" reminds me a little of Peaches, and really makes me want to dance. –Cynthia Pinedo (Danger Collective)

FUCK YOU PAY ME: *Dumbed Down:* LP
Inimitable Cleveland hardcore legend Tony Erba's current band is every bit as vital as anything else he's been involved with. I've seen them live, and they fucking rip! Happily, they capture that amazingness on this recording. Erba's high-pitched vocals are lovable, and the songs mix serious political and social commentary with solid humor. I am especially obsessed with the song title "Dark Side of the Spoon." This LP is an absolute must, from the raging originals to the ultra-fun cover of the

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GG Allin classic "You Hate Me and I Hate You." –Art Ettinger (Tankcrimes)

FUZZLERS, THE: *Gourd of Truth:* CS
Well, pretty bummed that this band broke my lifelong streak of never hearing a song called "Ball Fuzz." Here's a dozen arrangements, with maybe a third of them being frantic, warbly hardcore songs and the rest quick orchestrations of tape loops, altered voices, and people farting around with keyboards and effects. There are perhaps a few very brief blips that bring to mind Sockeye or something, but mostly it just seems like an inside joke unfortunately put to tape. –Keith Rosson (WFB)

GARY WRONG GROUP, THE: Self-titled: 2 x LP
This is a career-spanning double LP collection of The Gary Wrong Group singles and compilation tracks. I love it when bands do that. The Gary Wrong Group plays chaotic punk madness in the vein of Swell Maps with a bit of Butthole Surfers' downbeat experimentation thrown in. I hate to make such an obvious connection, but many bands try this and TGWG go all in. If you're into that stuff, you should really check it out, as some of the songs are infections. As a collection of loose songs, it's a fun front-to-back listen. –Billups Allen (12XU)

GODHUNTER: *Codex Narco:* CS
There is something in Godhunter I like and something I don't care for at all. The riffs and rhythm section are heavy as a bag of rocks tied to your ankle, pulling you under water, but the dueling vocals—one part silky smooth, one part guttural growls—are a doom metal trope that I have never been crazy about. The song content, telling of ghosts and witches, and haunted, dead worlds keep me replaying the songs for the sake of the review but—for reasons I can't quite put my finger on—I will likely pass on this band in the future for other similar, more enjoyable, albums. –Jon Mule (Baby Tooth)

GOOLAGOON: *Life of Crime:* CS EP
This band is… insane. Call me ignorant and/or oblivious, but I don't get the name of the band or the sponge theme, like, at all. Appears they're some sort of Sponge Bob-themed band, or something. Either way, it's one of the best tapes I've received to review and that's coming from a guy who rarely ventures into the powerviolence/grind side of HC. This thing is fuckin' nuts. Intense and brutal without being too metal. The recording is perfect: gritty and clear. Eight tracks in barely over four minutes. If you're a blastbeats person, you seriously don't want to miss this band. –Steve Adamyk (goolagoonhc.bandcamp.com)

GRAND COLLAPSE: *Along the Dew:* LP/CD
Blistering hardcore from my homeland of Wales. Vocalist Calvin Sewell unleashes a torrent of anger as the metallic guitar races along and the drums take one hell of a battering from one of my favorite drummers, Glenn Tew. *Along the Dew* is a relentless series of hammer blows and firmly establishes the band as one of the best hardcore acts around. I was intrigued to hear an additional voice taking on the majority of vocals on "Though Bloodshot and Blurry" and discovered it was Efa Supertramp, described in some quarters as a "folk punk grrrl." Her contribution is outstanding and she makes the song her own. Another plus point is that the album features "Llygaid Gwyrdd"—translated as "Green Eyes"—a track in Welsh, something not often heard in hardcore circles. A thundering follow up to *Far from the Callous Crowd*. –Rich Cocksedge (TNS / Ruin Nation / Urinal Vinyl)

GREG CARTWRIGHT: *Tin Ten: 7"*
Glory is the songwriting of Greg Cartwright. How many people exist in the world that can make us excited about a live solo 7"? Not many. The recording is roomy in the best sense, easily transporting you to the Riverwest that lies deep down in all of us. Fantasizing turns into plotting, and by the end of side B you'll come to the conclusion that if you don't see the Reigning Sound in the next twelve months, your head is gonna fucking explode. Now just to figure out how to make this happen. –Daryl (Dusty Medical)

GROSS POLLUTER: *EP #1: 7"*
Right off the top, I must mention that Smogtown rule. Now and forever. I am a card-carrying Smog City Waver and if you figure that means bias when it comes to this review, then so be it. Gross Polluter rose from the ashes of Smogtown like some kind of phoenix out of a beach fire. Guitardo is in the wind and Chavez dialed it back to backup vocals. Darrin from Ciril took over lead vocal duties. The result is some tough-as-fuck beach punk of the finest order. While you get a bit of the old Smog vibe, the vocals definitely live more in the sonic neighborhood as Smut Peddlers or The Junk. Did I just hear some little blasts of Rikk Agnew style keyboard in there? Hell yeah, I did! There is a second 7" out now (also on No Front Teeth) from the same recording session that I have yet to get my hands on, but if it is anything like this, I am all over it. #114 signing off. –Ty Stranglehold (No Front Teeth)

GULAG BEACH: *Apocalyptic Beats:* LP
Wow. Looks like this Berlin band have been around for a minute, as they've already done a few records. I had no idea. Tremendous left coast-style punk with every song hitting the mark. Think L.A. Hostage bands like Broken Bottles or Smogtown or even early Posh Boy like the Crowd. I'm pretty sure these folks live nowhere near the beach but they got that vibe. For another non-beach reference, think Sonoma's Bodies, who I adore. I've battered the fuck out of this record already, one of my faves of the year. Scratch the surface, dig a little deeper, and see what you can find. Boss sounds. –Tim

Brooks (Phantom, phantom-records.blogspot.com)

HÄRDA UT: *Same:* LP
Seriously sick Swedish femme-fronted metallic hardcore at its finest. Tough as nails and truly unhinged, *Same* is the perfect follow-up to their rad 2016 demo. No Statik fans take heed; you've got to check this out. –Camylle Reynolds (Adagio 830)

HENRY FONDA: *Front Antinational:* LP
German powerviolence giants Henry Fonda finally return with a second full-length, this one-sided, sixteen-track LP. It's a phenomenal specimen. Most of the lyrics are in German, and the album comes beautifully packaged with a giant fold-out poster/lyric sheet. Powerviolence aficionados will dig it, and those with just casual interest in that sound will likewise have fun. It's so fucking fast that it makes me feel sluggish and lazy! Outstanding all around, *Front Antinational* is a blast. –Art Ettinger (Nerdcore)

HOLIDAY: *California Steamin':* LP
Alongside other U.K. bands like Chestnut Road and the Magnificent, Holiday puts forth a dozen sturdy melodic punk songs on a gorgeous translucent green platter. Earnest, a little yearning; they've got some nice little leads and melodies going on here. The songs tend to get somewhat lost among one another and sound a little same-y, but jams like "Lunch Break" and "Tuppence for Hate" do a nice job of setting things apart. Dug the Boris Johnson mockery on the back cover. –Keith Rosson (Brassneck)

INTERCISION: *Their Names:* CS
Decisive political anarcho hardcore. God, in the age of Trump it's great to hear music like this still being made. I'm not a smart enough man to write the political songs that need to exist in today's climate, but hearing extreme left-leaning issues in the forefront of hardcore music will never make me not smile. The music itself is crusty; emotions on the edge of losing control. The vocals feel so strained with anger and stress, as if the whole world is about to fall apart at any second. Angry music for trying times. –Bryan Static (Self-released, intercision.bandcamp.com)

JAMES THE FANG & SERIOUS SAM BARRETT: *The Dime Horse Shoe:* LP
Two established folk musicians collaborating on what they do best. They make a minimalistic Americana duo, just guitar and fiddle, and the whole album was recorded on a 4-track in a single day. I almost wish there were more pops and crackles on the record already; it'd probably add to the atmosphere. Most of these songs are traditionals, with a couple originals by each musician woven in convincingly enough. My Americana days are mostly over, but this is solid. –Indiana Laub (Arkam)

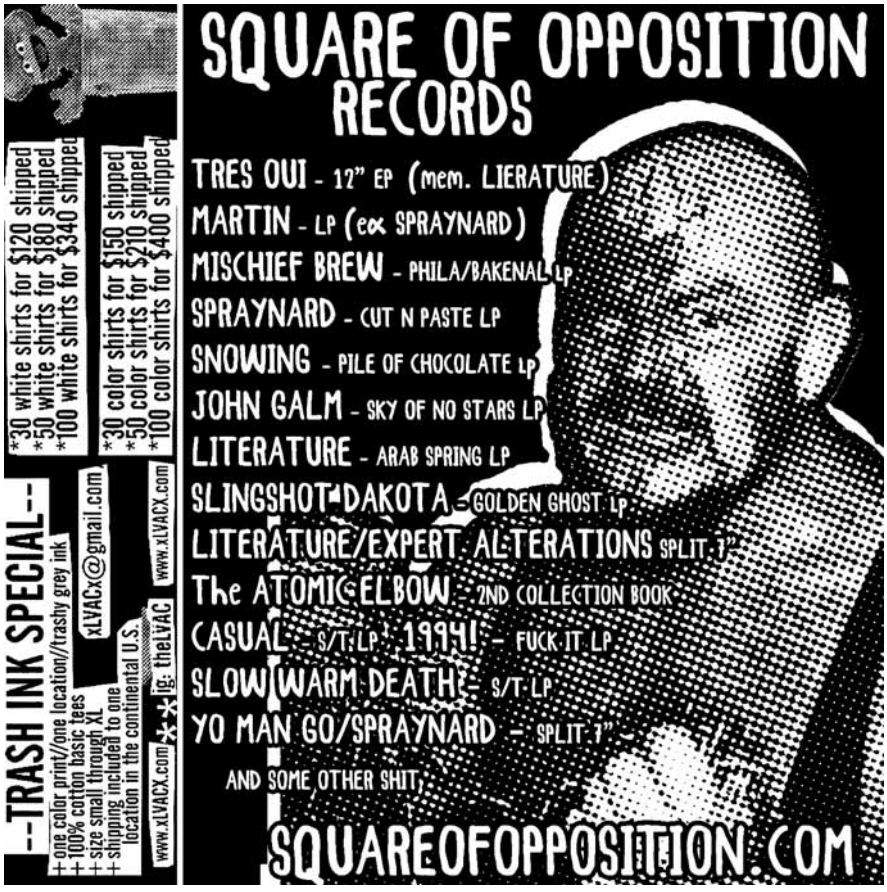
JETHRO SKULL: Self-titled: CD
The first song on this disc is called "Hated." The singer says he loves to be hated, which is good because I am more than happy to comply. Sludgy riff-metal does nothing for me, even when they're singing about skateboarding ("Coping Killer") let alone the usual fare of doom, gloom, booze, guns, and "junkie whores." Yawn. Oh yeah, there is a GG Allin cover, too. –Ty Stranglehold (Hated, no address listed)

KALEIDOSCOPE: *Volume 3:* 12"
Kaleidoscope are an alien band created in an outer space lab, a "verbovisual transmission and translation using our spatiosonic capabilities to probe the internal logic of your world." This six-song record is their findings. In summary, humans are fucked, the cops suck, and heavy '80s punk like late Black Flag and early Neurosis rules. Their research checks out. –Chris Terry (Feel It)

KINDLING / KESTRELS: Split: 7"
This cross-border split from Easthampton, Mass.' Kindling and Halifax, Nova Scotia's Kestrels is an excellent reminder of the depth of contemporary shoegaze. With one original and one cover each, this split is a testament to what a well-crafted four-song split can do. Rather than feeling slapped together, everything feels like it makes sense here. Kindling's side pairs a less-urgent Sunny Day Real Estate-esque track called "Wait" with a scuzzy remake of The Replacements' "Can't Hardly Wait." Gretchen Williams's vocals do something spectacular to Westerberg's particular brand of sad and euphoric lyrics. On the flip side, Kestrels' original "Octavio" is the meeting place of Hum and The Anniversary—a formula that carries through to their cover of My Bloody Valentine's "Thorn," to which they add a notable edge. This is what splits are supposed to be—cohesive, sharp, and witty. The colored vinyl doesn't hurt either. –Theresa W. (Noyes, noyesrecords.com)

KINDLING: *No Generation:* LP
Primo shoegaze/noise pop type stuff found here—guitars deconstructed into basically noise vehicles, bright pop hooks up the wazoo, all covered up in a sound blown way the fuck outta proportion that bores huge holes where your ears should be and pours in some sugar. Made for soundtracks to summer days with a whole lot of not a whole lot to do on the itinerary. In a word: glorious. –Jimmy Alvarado (Adagio830)

KIRA JARI: *The Cackle Is Backle Spring Break Tour 2017:* CS
Whoa! I wasn't expecting this. Kira Jari have the power and intensity of Bad Future and hearts on their sleeve earnestness of Low Culture but hammered through a Denton, Texas power pop filter (not surprising as they recorded this at Cool Devices). I love this so much. There must be a scientific reason why so many amazing bands come from this part of the world. I want more! –Ty Stranglehold (Kira Jari, kirajaritx.bandcamp.com)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KNIGHTS OF TRASH, THE:
Self-tilted: EP
This band is largely a Thee Milkshakes tribute band, and having already been a cursory fan of Billy Childish and his work with Thee Headcoatees, this was blasting in a garage right up my alley. If we're comparing these covers to the originals, they stack up in so many ways. This four piece from Seattle, Wash. are completely nailing the vocal delivery, lo-fi production, art style, and attitude. While all members share in the singing duties, it's guitarist Robby Splinter who's carrying the Childish torch the most. His gruff, breathy delivery is as close as it gets to replicating the U.K. rock'n'roll Renaissance man. I know for certain that the songs on the B-side are covers of Thee Milkshakes, but I'm unsure about the tracks on the flipside. While I do rather enjoy simplistic, dancey, and easily consumable garage rock, there are still echoes of problematic subject matter. For example in "Don't Love Another" Childish (originally) threatens to chop off the hand of his romantic partner if she's caught holding hands with another man. Is there a way to pay tribute to a seemingly innocuous band while also not perpetuating acts of violence and abuse in relationships? I'm not sure if it's up to The Knights Of Trash to rally to that calling, but I'd be remiss if I failed to mention that. But if you're a fan of tunes ala The Sonics, The Mummies, and The Cramps, this is an EP that'll be right at home in your collection. –Kayla Greet (Static)

KRIMEWATCH: *"Machismo" b/w "New York Nightmare":* Flexi
Slays. Krimewatch offers up a limited yellow flexi—with surprisingly good sound quality—which doesn't disappoint. Both songs total just barely over the three-minute mark. Get in, get it done, leave them wanting more. "Machismo" offers up primal bass angst chug with releases into explosive hardcore chaos; the vocals are forcefully and succulently shouted. "New York Nightmare" throbs with a pit-inducing mid-tempo pulse that is sonically sparse yet powerful. Stylistically, they are in the vein of Cro-Mags, but better. –Camylle Reynolds (Boss Tuneage)

LAST PICKS, THE:
***If We Get Picked at All:* CS**
There's this sort of '90s resurgence happening all over Seattle music. It's difficult to explain without pigeon-holing bands into something that doesn't totally apply to them. In my own head I've been calling it Lisa Frank punk because it's childish (in a good way), colorful, messy, and all-out fun. Last Picks fall into this category by writing songs that are so simple that you don't even notice. Lyrics are easily describable and just repetitive enough to have you singing along after one listen. They're also somewhat sloppy and intentionally nerdy. For example, the first track "Arcade Bro" deals with a subject near and dear to me—playing pinball! The tune is calling out dudes who hassle women at arcades 'cause the bros are trying to get laid when we just want to get high scores. The other four tracks cover topics, such as ants and suicide pacts, that are sure to become ear worms in no time. Plus the band really lives up to their name by dressing in awkward-fitting athletic gear and looking like they'd rather do shots than take them. –Kayla Greet (Den Tapes)

LIFE STINKS: *"Hanging from the Ceiling"* b/w *"Shadow Chilling on the Sidewalk":* 7"
Bleak, minimal, and powerful punk from San Francisco. You can judge this record by its cover, which is just a red stamp of a chain. "Hanging from the Ceiling" has a flailing, Voidoids feel with a meatier low end. "Shadow Chilling on the Sidewalk" holds its own against anything on the second side of *Damaged* except "Depression." Fucking into it. –Chris Terry (Total Punk)

LÖGNHALSMOTTAGNINGEN:
***Äntligen en ny EP med Lögnhalsmottagningen!:* 7"**
The cover of this record features a home-cooked steak and lobster meal, paired with a bottle of pricey looking champagne. It's so perfect. The moral of Lögnhalsmottagningen: why pay top shelf prices for obscure KBD 7"s when you can make them at home for pennies on the dollar? It's spazzy, off-kilter, intentional music that's played from the heart. All the Swedish I know is from looking up lyrics and band names, but with Lögnhalsmottagningen I just wanna keep as much of it a mystery as possible. Damn, those green beans look good. –Daryl (Emotional Response)

LONG KNIFE: *Sewers of Babylon:* 7"
From where I sit, Portland's Long Knife doesn't get the love it deserves. Having released two albums and a handful of singles full of barnstorming punk/hardcore, it's not a band I tend to hear too many friends getting excited about. Quite simply, this five-track EP is a continuation of the intensity, speed, and similarities to Poison Idea and The Freeze that those accustomed to the band are already aware of. However, this time the songs feature a punchier, more melodic sound, one which I'm sure would find favor with many of the uninitiated, in addition to current fans. People really need to join the Long Knife Appreciation Society or they can consider themselves total dimwits. –Rich Cocksedge (Beach Impediment)

LONG KNIFE: *Sewers of Babylon:* 7"
Long Knife is one of the best hardcore punk bands today, and I'd guess that their relative inactivity on the touring front is the only reason that this is the first time you're reading about them. Let's fix that. Their second and most recent album, *Meditations on Self Destruction*, was an easy Top 10 of 2014 pick. The "Negative Mental Attitude" video (from the EP, *Possession*) is a rare, good reason to log on to youtube. Long Knife is a leading example of what a hardcore band can do to keep things interesting in a genre where sameness and monotony abound.

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Without losing a fucking ounce of the hardcore aggression they established on their first album, *Wilderness*, they've managed to continually inject new ideas and variety into their sound, showing real songwriting prowess. *Sewers of Babylon* contains five powerful songs, each one individually memorable. Channeling the raw brutality of hometown kings of punk, Poison Idea, and venturing into early Fucked Up territory with an explosive mid-tempo attack, Long Knife is the hardcore band we need in 2017. Get this now. –Chad Williams (Beach Impediment)

M.D.C. / ANTIDON'TS, THE: Split*: 7"*
The cover depicts a cartoon Trump giving a Nazi salute whilst dressed like Hitler so it's easy to get an idea of what this split will offer. M.D.C. should need no introduction and is renowned for being anti-authority, so it's good to hear "No Trump, No K.K.K., No Fascist U.S.A.," obviously an updated version of one of its most memorable songs. Its next offering is a reworking of "Big River," a Johnny Cash cover, previously released by the band in 1993. The Antidon'ts are the snotty upstarts here yet carry on with a similar theme via "Make America Think Again," a simple yet effective title, and "A Cold Day in Heck." It's good to see punk rock is still fighting back in these dark days. –Rich Cocksedge (Swamp Cabbage, swampcabbagerecords@yahoo.com, swampcabbagerecords.com)

ME FIRST AND THE GIMME GIMMES: *Rake It in: The Greatestest Hits:* CD
So, when you're essentially a cover band, can you really claim that *any* songs are your greatest hits? I mean, you didn't write them so they aren't your hits to claim. Me First And The Gimme Gimmes are here to challenge that notion by releasing a collection of traditionally non-punk songs done in the stereotypical slick Fat Wreck style from various previous releases of theirs with the "greatest hits" label slapped on them. Honestly, I can't think of any reason why someone would ever want to listen to punk versions of the worst mainstream garbage you can think of, but alas, here's a record of punk covers including Eagles or Billy Joel songs (among many others). The longevity of this band proves that there is essentially a market out there for just about any kind of bullshit gimmicky idea that someone can come up with, and just as long as you have a couple well-known, or dare I say "famous," punk dudes in your band. –Mark Twistworthy (Fat)

MERCURY TALES: *Dimanche Violence:* CD
Released as a tape in Europe, I was immediately hooked on Mercury Tales' fast, jangly riffs. The band's second release following a demo, the five tracks on *Dimanche Violence* are dark, reverb-y, and hauntingly beautiful. Singer Doris's ethereal sing-spoken—occasionally screamed—vocals and her poetic lyrics were a perfect match for the band's sound. Themes of fading youth in the track "You're a Ghost," and complex emotions revolving around female sexuality in the track "Pretty Legs," bring an added level of emotional depth to an already emotionally evocative band. The release comes with a black and white photocopied zine featuring lyrics, photos, and art. Halfway through the year at this writing, *Dimanche Violence* is already on my shortlist as a contender for top releases this year. –Paul J. Comeau (mercurytales.bandcamp.com)

MIDGUT: *Chagas for the Enemy:* CS
Formerly known as Barbed Wire and playing raw d-beat, this band is now known as Midgut and sound a little more like Lärm or Seein' Red; much more up my alley. This tape has eight songs of still-raw hardcore punk but the production and performance are even better. Throat-shredding vocals and raging guitars, along with a rock solid rhythm section, drive these one-to-two minute rippers. Midgut, along with Sin Cave and Altered State are making for an incredibly inspiring current hardcore thing happening in Denver. The band is already blowing away this recording with their live show. I simply cannot wait to hear what the next recording sounds like. –Mike Frame (midgut.bandcamp.com)

MIRACLE DRUG: *Demo 2015: 7"*
On first pass, I was stoked on Miracle Drug. Old school hardcore featuring ex-members of some great '90s bands, on a great label, what's not to love? Digging into the lyrics though, I found the song "Foreign Exchange," raised some red flags for me. Lyrics like, "I never wanted to admit that world peace can't be done / but melting pots are myths, no mix, no matter how you stir / It's sad to say that sometimes we just do not belong," rubbed me the wrong way, and yeah bro, I get there's a Cro-Mags reference in there. The song features further lines along the same vibe, and the message I gleaned from them killed anything good I felt about this. –Paul J. Comeau (Trip Machine)

MISSILES OF OCTOBER: *Better Days:* CS
This mix of guttural, screaming vocals and borderline funky progressions makes for what seems at first like a weird new mutation of hardcore. But the longer I listened, the more I heard the tracks slow down and get distended into a noisy stoner rock amalgamation that featured their share of literal wailing and dragging, riff-driven dirges. Somewhere between mangy punk and sludge, the Missiles Of October manage to make a drag sound tight, and that is no small task. –Lyle (What's For Breakfast?)

MONPLAISIR: Demo: LP
I was immediately struck by Monplaisir's minimal, yet elegant, record design. All lyrics and album information are contained on a sleeve that wraps around the brown album jacket. The barebones packaging

matches the seven songs captured on wax; however, the demo-quality production (four mics in a rehearsal space) undermines the band's lush post-punk arrangements. Because the entire album lacks body, the guitar interludes end up sounding dull, and when the vocals kick in, they're muffled and lifeless. Sure, it's the singer's "style" to sound bored, but the songs shouldn't leave me feeling that way as well. Ultimately, Monplaisir's more accessible interpretation of Sonic Youth works for me; sadly, the lackluster production prevents me from becoming totally invested. –Sean Arenas (Echo Canyon, echocanyonrecords.com)

MOZART: *Nasty:* 7"
Ya know, Mozart, the composer, was actually sort of a nasty guy (in the sense that he loved writing limericks about shitting in bed and made a song called "Lick My Arse"). Anyway, this release from Iron Lung has its moments. The most exciting was a song that sounded enough like cats fighting in a washing machine to alarm the felines in my home. Frenetic, high-pitched punk that crams six cuts onto seven inches. –Cheyenne Neckmonster (Iron Lung)

MUNJITAS DEL FUZZ, LAS: *Es el 69:* 7"
Sleazy, sludgy '60s worship outta Spain, the kind that requires heavy covering at the outset and a shower when it's over and done. Lewd, crude, stompin'. –Jimmy Alvarado (Slovenly)

MYSTERY DATE: *Love Collector:* LP
These cats follow up some great singles with a great album. Potent power pop is the order of the day here—simple, direct, and without pretense or polish. The sound of every great summer ever. –Jimmy Alvarado (Collision Course)

NATTERERS: Demo: Flexi-disc
Flexi-discs are interesting. They seem to be disposable and indestructible at the same time. Hmmm. I digress. Natterers are an all-out punk rock blast that gets my blood pumping. If this is just a demo, I can't imagine what an actual recording would sounds like. This is damn near perfect. Fans of Neighborhood Brats and Piss Test take note. Natterers kind of give me the same feeling. I definitely want more! –Ty Stranglehold (Boss Tunage)

NATTERERS: *Toxic Care:* 7" EP
Out of all the bands that have sprung up in the past year or so, Natterers is the one that excites me the most. Its demo cassette and flexi highlighted a band hugely influenced by the SoCal sound of the '80s, plus, at times, they really reminded me of one of my favorite bands, Night Birds. This six-track EP continues in exactly the same vein, and in doing so ticks all the right boxes for me. It has great cover art courtesy of Hal Mundane, a wicked guitar sound, and Emma's vocals are the icing on the cake, especially on "Numb," as a torrent of words spew from her mouth, barely allowing her to take a breath. I saw Natterers live recently and it was such a damn fine set that I've planned a road trip to see them in a couple of months. A band definitely worth checking out. –Rich Cocksedge (Boss Tuneage / Serial Bowl)

NATURE BOYS: Self-titled: LP
With a serrated glow, Nature Boys cut through the decay we all find ourselves currently existing in. Immune to hype and pretension they are a band fully focused on being a band. I can't tell if they exist in the pre- or post-internet era, but goddamn, I want to go there with them. Hailing from Kansas City, Kansas (a city so nice they named it one and a half times), Nature Boys take the classic Dead Moon/region rock sound and approach, and fuck it up to utter perfection. Let the multi-vocal harmonies and guitar leads take you away. Let them take you to a place you remember hearing of: the punk utopia we were all promised. When Nature Boys hit you up (*and they will!*): set up their show, tell your friends, tell everyone, and don't miss the boat to the promise land. –Daryl (Mandible)

NED GARTH EXPLOSION: *Flashlight Tan:* LP
Honestly, this is kind of a refreshing. It's a mix of modern garage and surf, but has some serious throwback qualities that remind me of '80s Tom Petty and Dire Straits. They keep things chill, but still rockin', and I can't say nothing bad about this one. –Camylle Reynolds (Sad Pad, contact@sadpadrecords)

NEEDLES//PINS: *Good Night, Tomorrow:* LP
Needles//Pins are easily one of my favorite bands out of Vancouver these days. They are one of those bands who you just can't imagine getting better, but with each record they do. *Good Night, Tomorrow* is their third LP and continues the trend. Catchy, feel bad tunes are N//P's signature move, and they've pulled out all the stops this time. Incredibly sad lyrics paired with upbeat guitar pop result in me singing along loudly with a smile on my face. Adams's voice has just the right amount gravel. Imagine a pinch of Joey Vindictive along with a pinch of Frankie Stubbs (this is something I am saying as a high compliment). Maybe I don't know what I am talking about? Hell, they still remind me of The Beltones at times for some reason. What I do know for certain is that I love this music, and this record is going to be in heavy rotation around my house this summer! –Ty Stranglehold (Mint / Dirt Cult)

NO FAITH: *Forced Subservience:* LP
Can you successfully combine the most appealing aspects of powerviolence, grindcore, noise, and sludge yet still exist in an oversaturated market of Man Is The Bastard clones? Yes, because *Forced Subservience* exists. Listen closely: between the sonic ass beating you're receiving is a call to arms. This world is a fucking toilet and there's a giant orange arm with its fingers on the flusher. Had this been conceptualized

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decades ago and released on Slap A Ham, then perhaps we'd be creating altars to this masterpiece, yet fortunately for you this record is readily available for your consumption—only if you act fast. –Juan Espinosa (Iron Lung)

NOTHINGTON: *In the End:* CD
When Nothington dropped their odds and ends collection *Lost Along the Way* in 2013, I assumed that kind of marked the end of the line for the band. Imagine my utter joy then, to find this baby in my review stack! Eleven tracks in total, *In the End* shows the band a little older and perhaps wiser and wearier than last remembered. The familiar gruff of the dual vocalists now roars in a more restrained and mournful manner. The album's lyrical content is as thoughtful and introspective as ever and, again, point to a more mature worldview and general world weariness. The production and mix are next level as well—though as funny as it sounds to complain out loud about—I cannot get used to the sound of the snare drum which is a mushy poof rather than the crisp crack of a traditional-sounding snare drum throughout the entire CD. Small gripe, great disc. –Garrett Barnwell (Red Scare, redscare.net)

OBEDIENCE: Self-titled: EP
Hardcore punk that teeters towards flying off the rails. It's fast, but with tempo changes to keep you engaged, and the energy is constant. Ex members of Tear It Up and J Church make up this new Austin band. "Next Wasteland"—the best of the six songs (originally released as a demo)—lashes out at the shitty state America. Looking forward to what they do next. –Matt Average (Fair Warning)

OBSTRUCTION: Self-titled: Flexi
Fast, angry hardcore originally released as a cassette but re-released on a flexi disc 7". This latter quality is the most special thing about it. It's totally serviceable for what it is, which is playing so fast that there isn't even time for breakdowns. It occupies that not-so-exciting space between a fast band with more personality like Municipal Waste and a band that truly takes the genre to the edge like Charles Bronson. –Theresa W. (Boss Tuneage, bosstuneage.bigcartel.com)

OTZI: *"Gong Show" b/w "Sunbeam": 7"*
Here's a rad, new darkwave band from Oakland, Calif. "Gong Show" has a tribal and minimal feel that brings back memories of Heart Of Snow and Arctic Flowers. The flipside, "Sunbeam," is a great track that gets brighter, with more melodic guitars and chorus added to the bass. Fans of darker punk need to check this out. I can't wait to hear more from this band. –Ryan Nichols (Long Way To Go)

OUTTA SORTS, THE: *The Trouble with Love:* 7" EP
There's a lotta cool stuff happening on these five songs, so I can understand giving in to the temptation to succumb to the functional utility of the 7" 33 format, despite its shortcomings in the volume department. The title track is a scuzzy and bald-faced "You Really Got Me" ripoff, but if you're gonna steal, steal from the best, I say. "Rebel vs. Myself" and "Think Too Hard" are fast, clever punk'n'rollers, "Snow Covered Dreams" is straight up Chocolate Watchband-styled '60s jangle-punk, and "S.F. Is an Iceberg" explains why I wasn't really getting a San Francisco vibe from these guys: They love California but can't afford to live there anymore, so they're moving back to Atlanta (which they manage to rhyme with "mantra," sorta). I can't tell if they cuff their jeans funny or not, but the fact of this record's very existence indicates that an album is clearly overdue. *Give me more, you cads!* BEST SONG: "S.F. Is an Iceberg." BEST SONG TITLE: "S.F. Is an Iceberg?" Seems kind of like a rainburg to me, but whatever. FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: Everyone's last name is "Love" and boiled peanuts suck. –Rev. Nørb (Self-released)

OXBOW: *Thin Black Duke:* LP
Oxbow is known for being an art rock band that often defies comparison. Their albums have often been very inaccessible to the casual music fan. Oxbow's latest offering, *Thin Black Duke,* is far different, though. The aggressiveness exhibited on past albums is rare. (The exception is "A Gentleman's Gentleman," which has vocalist Eugene Robinson spitting and snarling his words for the first few minutes.) The eight songs on the album are at times beautiful, with piano, strings, and horns mixed with guitar, bass, and drums. Sometimes Oxbow locks into a groove and other times they're sparse and gentle. On the whole, the band that they most reminded me of on *Thin Black Duke* is Faith No More, but there is a wider array of things going on here. At times, the forty minutes of music comes across as almost orchestral but there's no doubt there is still muscle and a non-traditional structure to the sound. Still, it's a much different angle for the band, but one I highly recommend, even if you've never been a fan of the Bay Area quartet. –Kurt Morris (Hydra Head, hydraheadrecords.com)

OXIDANT: *Promo:* CS
Raleigh's Oxidant put together a tape that's part practice demo and part live recordings. It lurches maniacally from steadily bopping punk rock to frenzied speedcore. Reminiscent of Man Is The Bastard but somehow with more riffs. I look forward to hearing more from this band. –Lyle (Self-released, oxidant.bandcamp.com)

PANDEMIX: *Scale Models of Atrocities:* LP/CD
This is the kind of record that announces itself by first slapping you in the face with such force that your equilibrium is skewed until realisation dawns that something is going on which requires total attention. That focus is directed towards a band sounding fresh and

exciting, musically and lyrically, delivering scathing barbs at the establishment without regurgitating the rants of others. It's a wonderful mixture of anarcho-punk, hardcore, and post-punk for those who like music of an acerbic and unyielding persuasion. Long live punk rock! –Rich Cocksedge (Boss Tuneage)

PARASITE DIET: *Coast to Coast:* CD
The Connie Dungs are the greatest pop punk band of all time, so it's no surprise that one of today's best pop punk bands likewise hails from Kentucky. *Coast to Coast* is seemingly scientifically engineered for maximum catchiness. Anyone not averse to "la la core," as a wise friend of mine once called this musical form, will be unable to resist the magnetic lure of Parasite Diet. Twelve of these fifteen songs are originals, plus there are covers of hits by Shonen Knife, The Outrights, and They Might Be Giants. Physical copies of this CD are purportedly selling like hotcakes, so seek it out before it's gone. –Art Ettinger (Outloud!)

PISSE: *Mit Schinken durch die Menopause:* LP
I don't know if it was intentional or not, but this record was completely sealed on every side, so I had to cut it out of the packaging. Either way, I loved that about it. The first song sounds like something from Die Antwoord, then goes in to a forty-eight second punky song, then in to a minimal synth-punk song with Rudimentary Peni-sounding vocals. The whole record continues in this way. It's full of surprises that kept my interest. If you want something new and interesting from Germany, this is it! –Ryan Nichols (Beau Travail)

PLEITE: Demo: CS
A very promising demo from what I assume is an obscure German treasure. Bound up in beautiful black and white packaging, the three songs on this cassette introduces Pleite (which means "broke") as a creative, tight post-hardcore band in the vein of Drive Like Jehu but with more melodic and straightforward qualities. You might not think this is possible, but Pleite manages to make it so. –Theresa W. (Phantom)

POISON BOYS: *Bad Mouth: 7"* EP
Three tracks of sleazy, trashy punk/rock. The New York Dolls are the obvious influence here, but there are echoes of others as well, particularly Los Angeles sleaze legends the Mau-Maus. Not a bummer in the bunch, with "Fluctuation" being the pick to click. –Jimmy Alvarado (No Front Teeth)

POLITICAL CRAP: *Slow Death: 7"*
Speaking of "political crap," I am going to steer clear of where Duane Peters is now as a social media persona, other than to say if you know him personally, get him some help. He is spinning out and it is really sad. Political Crap was one of his first bands. Here are three songs worth of prime DP teenage snot-launching. I've liked most of the bands he's done and this is becoming a favorite quickly. Cheers to Slope Records for exhuming this relic. It deserves to be heard. It's too bad there aren't more songs out there somewhere. True skate punk! –Ty Stranglehold (Slope)

POOR FORM: *Achin':* CS
Poor Form was (I am fairly certain they are done at this point) another amazing Vancouver band featuring members of Siren Songs and Needles//Pins. I was fortunate enough to see them play a few times and knew what I was in for listening to this: beautiful, driving songs that stumble along that fine-line, perfect melody and spinning out of control. This is like cold drinks with friends in a backyard on a hot day or skateboarding in the middle of the night when the only company you have is the hum of the streetlights and your heart thumping in your chest. Poor Form is the soundtrack to my joy and my loneliness. I embrace them both. –Ty Stranglehold (Rumbletowne)

PRESSING ON: *Future: 7"*
Truly crushing sounds here. Pressing On bring d-beat into the present day, and the kicking and screaming is all part of the ride. Motorcycle-accident-to-the-face kinda music. With members having done time in bands such as Talk Is Poison and From Ashes Rise, you wouldn't expect less than the most menacing, blunt attack. You also get the longest pick slide ever recorded. Throw this record on, grab a sledgehammer, and put some new windows in your walls. –Daryl (Deranged)

P.R.O.B.L.E.M.S.: *Enemy / Spy: 7"*
Two thunderous punk rock crankers from this PDX outfit (members were/are in Breaker Breaker, Atrocious Madness, Resist, Severed Head Of State, Hellshock, Pierced Arrows, and Detestation, to name just a few). "Everyday" starts off with a slightly broody intro then begins building in tempos as the song propels forward. "Enemy / Spy" is a rapid attack that pulls slightly back in the tempo at one point before asking "Are you a spy?" then a Discharge-esque guitar solo comes wailing out of nowhere. Pretty good! Pretty good! –Matt Average (Just 4 Fun, j4f.dk)

PROTRUDERS: *Lively Time for Snake Skin Reading:* CS
Quick tape with a few shunted, abbreviated soundscapes peppered with what sounds like *very* live recordings of a band doing a handful of early '80s SST-inspired hardcore and art punk jams. With extra layers of dirt and fuzz on top of an already hot recording, this thing rockets past "lo-fi" straight into "I can't make out shit on this thing" territory. Gonna have to pass. Appreciated the hyper-orange spraypainted shell case. –Keith Rosson (Protruders)

PSYCHIC TEENS: *Hex:* CDEP
Five more tracks of unsettling post-punk from these malcontents. They keep the mood dark whether they're crushing eardrums or opting for a quieter burn. Recommended. –Jimmy Alvarado (Hex)

PUZZLECUTS: *No Max Amount:* CD
You know the high school boyfriend on TV shows or in high school romantic comedies? He has a band, they play in their parent's garage, and he makes mix tapes for his girlfriend. Puzzlecuts sounds like that. The songs don't flow that well and harmonies don't sync up. While listening to this album, I thought their title track's lyrics—"there's no max amount of how many times you can repeat at higher volumes, a broken record"—were wrong, because there *was* a max amount of times I could only listen to this broken record of so-called emo punk revival. Sometimes I listened to it on repeat for clarity, but only on low volume. –Cynthia Pinedo (puzzlecuts.bandcamp.com)

RACE CAR: *BYOGK:* 7"
BYOGK stands for Build Your Own Go Kart, by the way, and it comes with a paper cut-out of a go kart in case you don't have, like, room for a real one. Race Car is a one-man band that chugs along like a jalopy on a poorly maintained gravel driveway. Hang on tight; that drum machine's got a mind of its own! –Cheyenne Neckmonster (Neck Chop)

RANDOM CONFLICT: *Black List:* CD
Modern melodic hardcore, American-style. Random Conflict are clearly a punk band through and through, but you can't discount the Hatebreed-tinged vocals and breakdowns here. Definitely not the sound of Nashville, but I'm sure these guys have no problem getting people out to their shows. –Steve Adamyk (Cat Factory / No Profit)

RAUKOUS: *Apparitions:* CD
Rudimentary Peni meets T.S.O.L. at a Lovecraft convention to ponder the eldritch horrors of floaty-eyed shoggoths and lurking fears. This horror kid burned out on "horror punk" long before it even had a name, but creative songwriting and conviction make this whole endeavor much, much better than it has any business being. Good work. –Jimmy Alvarado (Nothing But A Nightmare)

REPETITOR: *Gde ćeš:* LP/CD
Post-punk noise rock from Slovenia. What connects with me most are the hypnotic grooves created by the rhythm section. I find myself being immersed deep into the heart of the tracks. The guitar flies off on tangents, creating an abrasiveness which is a complementary counterpoint to that low end throb. Male and female vocals take turns in replicating the harmonious and discordant elements, never allowing one approach to settle in for too long. I've seen some footage of the band playing on a television show and all it does is make me determined to see this band live, as the songs seem to grow in stature in that environment. –Rich Cocksedge (Moonlee)

ROHT: Self-titled: 7"
Loud, lumbering noise punk from Reykjavik that sounds like it was recorded in an ice cave. Guttural and entranced howls of defiance over heavy bass and sludgy guitars; it sounds just as brutal at 33 RPM. The cover art is beautiful and intricate. Nicely done. –Cheyenne Neckmonster (Iron Lung)

ROUND EYE: *Monstervision:* LP
A Chinese-based band, featuring some Americans, releasing an album on a Canadian label and having recorded a video in North Korea can only mean one thing—fuck borders! I enjoyed the previous Round Eye album and this one is no different in terms of providing me with some aural pleasure. The songs are interspersed with a narration courtesy of Joe Bob Briggs from *The Daily Show* and, despite me finding this a bit tiresome after a few plays, the music more than makes up for that. Round Eye continues to embrace a quirky and eclectic approach, which ensures an oddball output verging on it being the bastard offspring of Butthole Surfers and The Fall. If that sounds a bit mad then that is because it is, but it all works well. –Rich Cocksedge (Sudden Death)

RUINED FAMILIES: *Education:* LP
Hardcore-as-art. Lotsa time changes and a big, blustery sound that's a helluva lot more nuanced than might seem at first blush. Not my bag, but I like the idea of them striving for new ideas. –Jimmy Alvarado (Adagio830)

SALTY: *Preservation Blues:* CS
This is the good weird. Salty's sound harkens back to the mid-aughts, that dark time where we decided to make everything sound digital as the 1980s interpreted it. The synth and effects are not overwhelming here, so it works. "Baby, Me Walk Upright" is about eight minutes deep into side A of the cassette and reminds me of an underappreciated Virginia-based band I loved as a teen called VCR. It has synths right out of a haunted house, which makes it hilarious and great. As much as Salty calls out to some nostalgia, they'll always be connected to 2017 thanks to the title "Die Lil Pupper (Requiem for Straw Doggos)." Salty is like Mean Jeans on memes with a sheen of electroclash. –Nicole X (Self-released, saltykcmo@gmail.com)

SANTA ANA KNIGHTS: *Knight Skool:* 7"
San Diego five-piece, Santa Ana Knights, are wacky in the most endearing way. Featuring Davey Quinn of Tiltwheel, the band are flush with medieval-space-dinosaur imagery, a scrappy rock/pop punk hybrid sound, and nihilistic drunk-dude-ranting-on-a-street-corner lyrics. They kick off their first EP, *Knight Skool*, with the sunny, catchy track, "The Bartender," and its opening line: "Interstellar Flatulence!" Maybe they're implying that we're all made of star farts; it's sort of a beautiful sentiment when you think about it. Also on the A side, "Kettner Blvd RNC"—originally titled "Somethin Somethin Crazy Talk"—drives a bit harder and features lyrics that may *actually* be based on someone's

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unhinged ramblings overheard near the waterfront. There's a through-line here that carries over to the B side, both in the upbeat "Smack My Bitch Up"-esque narrative of "How'd I Get Home?" and the semi-incoherent, fully-ridiculous proclamations of love on the title track, "Night Skool." That is, you may not always know what the fuck Santa Ana Knights are talking about—the jury's still out on whether *they* know what the fuck they're talking about—but you're gonna have a damn good time listening to it regardless. –Kelley O'Death (Red Brontosaurus, redbrontosaurus.com)

SCHIZOPHONICS, THE: *Ooga Booga:* 10"
The Schizophonics crank out '60s-style freakbeat garage punk that can throw any middling get-together into a frantic, frenetic mêlée of face-sucking ecstasy. I want you all to pick up this record, but I understand how it might not be for everyone, *yetttt*, I think it is absolutely imperative that everyone (seriously: all o' ya!) sees this band live. It's the most relentless live performance you will see this side of straight-edge teenage hardcore. This trio risks bodily harm to bring the world the power of rock'n'roll at its finest. Get down with it, or forever be the square you feared you'd become. –Daryl (Pig Baby)

SECT: Self-titled: LP
"Vegan. Straightedge. Old." That's how Sect self-identify. It's an identity you can hear blasting out your speakers from the '90s-hardcore-tinged breakdown riffs, to the pointed lyrics of their songs. It's hard to not take notice of the supergroup status of a band featuring current and former members of Earth Crisis, Cursed, Fall Out Boy, and other bands—and sure there's a bit of '90s nostalgia at work here for me—but I thought this album ripped from start to finish. It takes some bands multiple releases—and many years of work—to craft the selection of bangers Sect have assembled on their self-released debut LP. This is sure to inspire not only a new generation of kids to X up and not eat meat, but might even bring a few old grizzled ones out of mosh retirement. –Paul J. Comeau (Sect, facebook.com/sectxvx)

SHIT BOYS: *The Literal Death:* CS
Shit Boys play street punk with gravel-throated vocals and razor-sharp guitar lines in the vein of Red Dons or Crusades. They come from Vancouver, British Columbia and sound like a kick ass night out in the Great White North. –Jon Mule (Self-released)

SIN CAVE: Self-titled*:* CS
This is the second demo from this unbelievably great band from Denver. Hyper political lyrics and perfect guitar tone are still the driving force. The playing and recording quality are a little bit better here. A band that can progress slightly and gain more confidence without changing what they do is what I love about the demo process. By the time this band gets to the level of putting out an album they will be an unstoppable force. I love that the cover art looks vaguely NYHC tough guy while the sound and lyrics are all feminist force. It makes for a great combination. Five songs on here: "Rompe Todo," "Time Is Up," "Brown and Down," "White Sisterhood," and "War." Denver Hardcore roolz, okay? –Mike Frame (sincave.bandcamp.com)

SLOW MUTANTS: *Demo 2016:* CS
I don't know what it is about Buffalo, N.Y. and post-punk, but they know exactly what to fucking do. Every song on this tape is a kind of twisty, paranoid, minimal, sarcastic hit—especially "Warped Moon" and "Queen." I've been thinking about the line "I've got a gag reflex in my mind" for days. Absolutely remarkable and killer. If they'd been around in the '90s, we'd all be talking about them in the same breath as Hoover, Unwound, and Smart Went Crazy. –Matt Werts (Drug Party)

SMITH STREET BAND, THE: *More Scared of You Than You Are of Me:* LP/CD
I'd seen the name of this band all over the place in recent years but until now I had never actually heard these Aussies—apparently loved by vast swathes of people—and with a healthy back catalogue. Such widespread adoration sometimes puts me on the back foot; ready to find fault where none exists, but these men from down under were having none of that. No, they sucked me right in on the first play, sounding like an Antipodean cross between Great Cynics, Bangers, and Titus Andronicus. I immediately found myself having warm, fuzzy feelings towards The Smith Street Band and acknowledging that I'd been a fool not to check it out before. This is indie, rock, and pop all rolled into one, with Wil Wagner's lyrics telling tales that draw you in like a good book. A point of note that may interest people is that the equally well-loved Jeff Rosenstock played on and produced the album. –Rich Cocksedge (Specialist Subject / SideOneDummy / Uncle-M / Pool House)

SOCIETY'S ILLS: *Stumble:* LP/CD
Stumble is the third album from Montreal's Society's Ills and it delivers on all the promise shown on the previous two long players. Yes, those first two records were good but the quartet has nailed down the art of writing consistently strong, melodic punk rock songs. The rowdiness is infectious and aided by a bunch of choruses guaranteed to get fists punching the air and lungs bursting in a singalong. This is better than any energy drink if your reserves are low. –Rich Cocksedge (Self-released, band@societysills.com, societysills.com)

SONGS FOR MOMS: *Rivers:* 12" EP
Songs For Moms' dual vocalists belt with the exuberance of Good Luck and RVIVR, but this isn't a gang vocal-laden pop punk album; the trio's songs twist and turn and writhe vulnerably on the floor. For a five-track 12", there's

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New Dougs: Stoked
Formed by two long time friends of the label, NEW DOUGS is an infectiously catchy NEW WAVE / PUNK duo from CHICAGO with ties to SIG TRANSIT GLORIA, THE BROCKMEYERS, and ETERNAL FLAMES. STOKED is a 7 song diverse and matured melding of all the aforementioned bands yet a refreshing extension sure to produce much more excellent material in the future.
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COUPLES
Barren Couples: S/T
Long time friend of label Scott Thomson (ex - CHICAGO THRASH ENSEMBLE, IRON REMINDERS, LITTLEMAN COMPLEX, LETTERBOMBS, and WAYOUTS) is back with more music...this time in the form of a solo noise project. BARREN COUPLES debut is a 4 song collision of sounds that we like to describe as AMBIENT CHILL NOISE... possibly the appropriate soundtrack for sitting alone in a dark basement while ignoring your family. Too harsh?
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a lot to unpack: the jaw dropping inventiveness of their unwinding arrangements (somebody please teach me the bassline to "Leap Now"); the confident, gripping melodies; the thought-provoking lyrics ("Nobody teaches you to use words like rape / that is one way that they always escape"). When they sing, "These scars are all mine / They grow bigger and more beautiful with time," I'm always gobsmacked by the sincerity and the willingness to be exposed and empowered at once. Although the record is over too soon, Songs For Moms has crafted five tunes with an ocean's depth. Dive in. –Sean Arenas (Rumbletowne, rumbletowne.com)

SPACE IS HAUNTED: *Contact:* CS
I've seen Space Is Haunted a couple times and knew they were cool and loud and echoey, but I was not prepared for how good *Contact* would be. The echoes go on forever and the songs are complete ragers and anthems (see: "Tidal Wave" and "For Science"). Most duo bands overcompensate with theatrics of one kind or another, but Jamie Levy and Katie Quider are totally comfortable and settled in their space. The songs are natural, distorted pop bursts, and so easy to like it's hard to believe this band isn't already huge somewhere. –Matt Werts (Drug Party, drugparty.org)

SPAZZ: *Deported Live Gorilla:* CD
The second in a trilogy of Spazz CD reissues, *Deported Live Gorilla* is a collection of songs from their splits with Subversion (released in Australia on Deported Records) and Romantic Gorilla (released by Sound Pollution USA) as well as a live-on-the-radio set from 1996 in its entirety, including songs that would wind up on Slap A Ham's "celebrity split 7" series" with Jimmie Walker (yes, JJ Evans from Good Times). The songs from both splits are Spazz in their mid-period glory where Max's drum fills were getting tighter, Chris's bass slinkier, and Dan's atonal guitar riffs were what I can only describe as muddy (not a diss, by the way: it just sounds so earth-moving and I can't describe it any other way!). Between the blink-and-you'll-miss-it powerviolence blasts, the kung fu movie samples, and the sludgy opuses "Donut Hole Gremlins" and "Total Meathead Fuck," I find myself banging along on my car's steering wheel and laughing my ass off at the dialogue from the restaurant scene in the film *A Better Tomorrow 2* ("if you have any dignity, apologize to the rice right now!") The radio show tracks are the cherry on top showcasing the band at peak performance. Even Chris has to remark "That was incredible! We should just break up now. We're not going to get any better!" As if. Make sure and send boxes of chocolates to Scotty from Tankcrimes for keeping the memory of Spazz alive to thrill new fans and to reacquaint us old heads. –Juan Espinosa (Tankcrimes)

SRIRACHA-CHAS, THE: *"Extravagasm":* Lathe-cut
Straight out the abandoned storefronts of Geneva, New York comes the proto-punk swagger of The Sriracha-Chas. The fidelity is questionable and god knows what this piece of plastic is doing to my needle, but the spirit and dedication is undeniable. Through the ever-spiraling chaos of geo-political politics lies the unquenchable thirst to kick out the jams, and in a small town in upstate New York, The Sriracha-chas are gonna do the weekend right. –Daryl (Girth)

STATE FUNERAL: *Tory Party Prison: 7"* EP flexi
Straight-up hardcore punk that reminds me of the mid-'80s sound. The tempos range from fast to mid, and the energy is constant. Politically minded, they take aim at the Tories, austerity, and the use of fear to control a population. "Mass Extermination" has a great opening—the drums sound awesome here—and the manic pace of "Austerity's Grip" is undeniable. That squealing feedback at the end had me thinking there was another song about to begin. Is there more to come? –Matt Average (Flex Punk / Boss Tuneage)

STATIC EYES: *The Thaw: 7"*
Good band name and great record cover. If I saw this as I perused the Thrillhouse Records bin in San Francisco, I'd take a gamble on it. And, I wouldn't be disappointed. Surprised, but not disappointed. This isn't the Deranged-realm hardcore band I was expecting; rather, a throwback to '60s garage rock bands, with a punk rock edge. Clean rhythm guitar combined with a fuzzed-out Fender Twin-sounding lead guitar and reverbed-out vocals make for a solid take on the classic Northwest garage rock sound—as epitomized by the Sonics and Wailers—but sans organ and horns. Strong showing from these Wisconsinites. –Chad Williams (Kitschy Manitou)

STEALERS: *Thin Ice:* LP
This LP offers ten songs of tuneful hardcore from this Dallas, Texas-based band. While listening to this, sometimes I'm reminded of a more succinct version of Fucked Up, while other times this brings to mind something more like what you might have heard on an Ebullition Records compilation from the '90s. The vocals are shouty and not as "tough" sounding as your stereotypical hardcore band, separating this from the pack from a lot of modern hardcore bands and the trappings they might face. This is definitely something that Stealers have working in their favor. While I would have loved for there to be a lyric sheet included so I can figure out what some of these songs are about, without it I can certainly tell that there's definitely some good shit happening here. –Mark Twistworthy (Codex)

STUPID KARATE: Self-titled: CD-R
Hailing all the way from Lille, France, Stupid Karate had me at

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the tracklisting: songs called "Cool Crimes" and "Smells Like Piss Spirit" instantly signal something I want to hear more of. I'm further charmed by the band's absolute refusal to write a song that lasts longer than two minutes. It's a fast, loud, fun record, punctuated by a noisy cover of the Undertones' classic "Teenage Kicks." Stupid Karate provide solid proof that the French kids are alright. –Lyle (Self-released, stupidkarate.bandcamp.com)

STYMIE: *Condescending World:* LP
Fuck yes! Stymie has been one of the best pop punk bands in Texas for over a decade, and this recording has been around for something like eight or nine years now without a proper vinyl release… until now. Imagine if Screeching Weasel weren't completely ignorant assholes (I know, that's a stretch). Then, sprinkle a layer of lo-fi garage rock-esque snotty attitude over it all. Now, put this band in a packed house show in Denton, Texas where the temperature is 110 degrees and everyone is jumping around, shoulder to shoulder, having the best times of their lives. That's exactly what Stymie sounds like to me. I'm so glad that this was finally released on vinyl, because it's a goddamned classic. –Mark Twistworthy (Rabid Dog)

SUNPOWER / CHEAP DRUGS: Split: 7"
Both sides deliver razor slices of traditional punk stylings. Sunpower brings some fast, upbeat swagger, some boppin' pub rock riffs ("Total Hate Song" chops into "Banned from the Pubs" territory), and a singer raging at you somewhere between Jello and Joey Vindictive's registers, with a touch of Duane Peters lilt. Cheap Drugs takes it down a darker path; the music evoking the spirit I find captured in the photos of *Slug and Lettuce*: black and white, action- and anger-packed, sweaty and sincere. Best lyric: "Burn the barriers, Cut the fences, No Border control, Let them in." –Matt Seward (Spastic Fantastic, spasticfantastic.de)

SWEET THINGS, THE: *"Love to Leave" b/w "Cocaine Asslicker Blues": 7"*
I appreciate The Sweet Things for keeping a fading style—dingy glam classic rock—alive. They do it well here. The riffs are clean and good. The drums are confident enough to play around in the space, pulling back and jumping forward at the right times. The vocals are objectively good. However, I would say it's done a bit too well most of the time and not well enough at other points. The sound is pretty formulaic and therefore it sounds familiar but that means the sound is generic overall. On the other hand, the music is not as dirty as you would expect. A song with a title like "Cocaine Asslicker Blues" should, bare minimum, sound like taking shots of whiskey at 1 AM in a dive bar in San Francisco's Tenderloin. Instead, it's sipping gin in a faux-speakeasy on main street in any-town California before dinner at 6 PM. Again, not bad but nothing terribly new. Sometimes it sounds like a movie producer's wet dream for the bar party scene in a movie. –Nicole X (Spaghetty Town)

THIGH MASTER: *"BBC" b/w "Park Road Clinical": 7"*
Damn, this 7" is cool. Brisbane's Thigh Master have been described as "a lost Flying Nun band," which is exactly correct. Bright and jangly guitars cut through understated and mumbling vocals, at once evoking both nostalgia and high school-era angst. Plus, both songs on the EP are just plain pretty. Short, simple, and catchy, this 7" left me hungry for more Thigh Master. –Simone Carter (12XU)

TIGER TANK: Self-titled: LP
The exact meeting point of Black Flag and Chixdiggit. Wording this critique is difficult because my overall feelings are neutral, but the things keeping me from liking this record are negatives. What I'm hearing is some okay-to-good pop punk mixed with a small spattering of kind of boring psych rock. If I wasn't a "professional" reviewer, I would have turned the record off half way through, almost specifically because of the song "The Blob." The good parts of the record sound like C-Tier Lookout Records bands, and that's all right. If that's a flavor you're desperately missing, give a chance. But that's no strong recommendation on my part. –Bryan Static (Burger)

UNFORTUNATE BASTARD, THE: *Hobo Circus:* CD
Acoustic tunes from San Francisco area "busker punks." It tends to avoid the normal pitfalls of the whole "folk punk" thing with good songs and good collaborators including Knox (The Vibrators), Cinder Block (Tilt), Dave Dictor (MDC) and Blag Dahlia (Dwarves), among others. From the opening acoustic strums, I was in the mindset that I was going to be bored and/or hate this but I quickly switched gears. These songs are engaging and rather than the background music that this style usually falls into for me, I was fully rapt, waiting to hear what the next song would bring. This album is a hidden gem that I wouldn't have heard otherwise. I like that. –Ty Stranglehold (Die Laughing)

US WEEKLY: Self-titled: LP
Hotchie motchie, I've been waiting on this here record for some time and it delivers in spades! US Weekly are cream of the crop of contemporary Austin, Texas punk bands (and there are a lot of good bands down this way these days). Seeing them live is always a treat. Their debut full length manages to cram the anxious explosion of power that is their live set into twelve inches. Every band tries this but not many succeed. You'd be surprised how much slash-burn they bring for a single guitar outfit. Snaky bass lines are revealed between said guitar slashes and strategic synth flourishes add to the jagged, angular presentation. Vocals have an almost hardcore sing-shout at times, but there's plenty of melody underlying. *Pink Flag*-era Wire is your departure point. Songs about the

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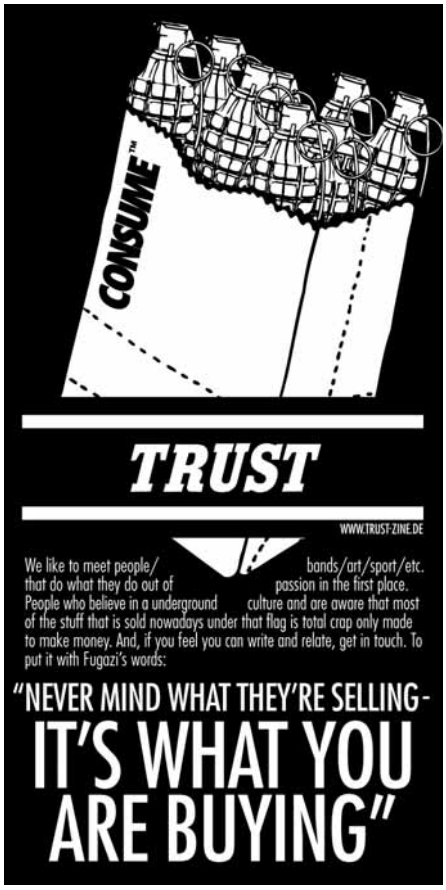
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world going down the toilet ("New Obsessions," "AC") and poor human relations ("Women"). Sounds about like these days, don't it? –Sal Lucci (Night Moves)

UŽ JSME DOMA: ***Parník 1985:*** **7"**
Sometimes, records find their way into your collection as though placed there by some sort of divine hand. For me, *Parník 1985* is one of those records. An off-the-wall avant-garde punk band from Czechoslovakia—my motherland!—playing their first-ever live set on a steamboat in 1985—my birth year!—to circumvent authoritarian control and censorship? I could not be more jazzed—*pun intended!* The beautifully illustrated, full-color, six-page booklet featuring photography from the event, plus personal reflections from attendee Alex Švamberk and FPB vocalist and bassist Miroslav Wanek—who later became Už jsme doma's frontman—makes this release that much more special. Už jsme doma are still alive and kickin'—having honed their musical approach over the last 32 years—but the youthful freshness and enthusiasm on this record is inimitable, more than making up for the lack of skill displayed at the band's outset. Instead of sloppy, their playing feels unrestrained; instead of unpracticed, it feels channeled from some other plane of existence. Už jsme doma have inspired comparisons to many widely-varied bands and artists over their long tenure, but these early recordings sound like spiritual siblings of John Zorn's thrash-jazz, especially his work with Naked City during the Yamatsuka Eye years. Their music may not always be considered "punk," but their story of anarchically evading the cops by smuggling their gear onto a steamer ship to play their very first show is the most punk thing in the fucking world. *Kurva policii!* –Kelley O'Death (PHR, info@phr.cz, phr.cz)

VARIOUS ARTISTS:
Fresh Ink Vol. 5: **CD-R**
This comp features tracks from bands on Nevada's SquidHat Records, and it skews heavily into the pop side of punk, including a rockabilly cover of "The Lady is a Tramp," and rampant multipart vocal harmonies over clean, anguished chord progressions. The inclusion of two separate Prince covers ("Erotic City" and "Raspberry Beret," covered by the New Waves and the Dirty Panties respectively) hits the spot for me, but the rest is too borderline Fall Out Boy for my taste. That's not to say pop punkers won't like this sampler, which covers a lot of ground within the genre, though. And everyone who listens through to the end will be rewarded by Hit Me Baby's so-wrong-it's-right medley of punk-edged Britney Spears covers. –Lyle (SquidHat, squidhatrecords.com)

VARIOUS ARTISTS:
Hamburger Saignant 2: **LP**
This fourteen-song collection of French/Belgian garage punque and dark psych had me wondering when the hell the last time I even *heard* a compilation of new bands was, let alone owned one. Compilations follow a predictable cycle in punk rock: A brief burst of delightful usefulness—*hey, listen to all these great new bands helpfully collected in one place!*—followed by a swift and massive glut of inferior product and years of total abstinence. One'd tend to suspect that quick and easy band-checking-outing courtesy of today's modern internet would've more or less killed the compilation's *raison d'être* (see what I did there?), but, then again, comps tend to flash that little burst of cool when one least expects it, so who knows, really? Moving on to more empirical concerns, things start strongly enough, with a spate of bands who all kinda remind me of the Dogs a little bit (sorry, in my world, bands from this corner of the galaxy either have to remind me of the Dogs or the Hatepinks [a third option would be Plastic Bertrand but no one ever takes it]), cresting with a cool cover of Eater's "Thinking of the USA" by Asphalt, then slides into a more psych-ic direction reminiscent of the buzz of fat hornets on black LSD. I tend to appreciate the punk more than the psych, but if you're familiar with this label's back catalog, that's what their front catalog sounds like, too. I enjoyed myself but am troubled that my favorite track is the Eater cover. BEST SONG: "Thinking of Doing another Eater Cover" by Asphalt. BEST SONG TITLE: "I Don't Give a Fuck (About Rock 'n' Roll)" by Dividers. FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: "Saignant" means "bleeding." –Rev. Nørb (Frantic City)

VARIOUS ARTISTS:
Shut the Fuck Up & Listen!!! Vol. 7: **7"**
Pardon the momentary existentialist detour, but gazing upon this PIG Records release, one question keeps asserting itself: what is the purpose of a compilation? Back in the day, comps had distinct functions: they were either pu-pu platters for indecisive record buyers, opportunities for smaller local bands to gain exposure, or special mixtapes made for fans by professionals. But with the current ubiquity of online streams, social media, and Spotify playlists, have comps become obsolete? If *Shut the Fuck Up & Listen!!! Vol. 7* is any indication, the answer is no, but the target audience may have changed. While the tracks are fine—Alcojuana's previously unreleased "Growing Pains" is fast and snarky; Potbelly's "United Underground" is frenetic and furious; The Freeze's unreleased live offering, "Explanation Day," is raw and catchy; and D.O.A. are fucking D.O.A., ferchrissakes—the accompanying packaging makes adding this 7" to your collection feel like putting someone else's family portrait in your personal photo album. Down to the details, this comp appears to have been made *for the people who made it*, not for us randoms. The most telling example is the eyeball-molesting graphic design, which somehow warranted a 300-word

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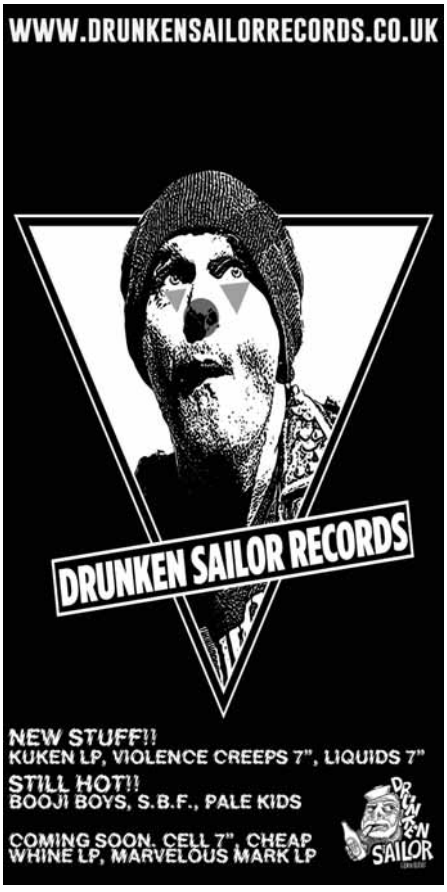
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backstory on the album's insert—rife with praise for both the art and the man who created it—written by PIG head-honcho, David Ulysses Portnow. The team at PIG clearly went out of their way to make sure we recognize that this comp is their baby… and we all know calling someone's baby "ugly" is a giant dick move. So, reviewers like myself are left with the less nuclear—but also less honest—option: "You must be so proud." –Kelley O'Death (PIG, pig-records.rocks / Little Mafia, littlemafia.com / 1332, 1332records.com / Whidbey Island Pyrate Punx Local 44)

VARIOUS ARTISTS: *Squidhat '77:* CD
Subtitled "A Las Vegas Punk Rock Tribute to 1977," the bands here pick songs from that year and give them a fresh coat of paint. Most of the songs chosen are on target, except for "Margaritaville." What's next—Las Vegas bands all cover "Cheeseburger in Paradise"? The remaining choices are solid. There was the strange decision of some bands to musically quote another song by the same artist in the middle of their chosen cover. Not sure of the reasoning there. But, overall, I enjoyed this collection. Pick it up and throw on at your next BBQ. –Sean Koepenick (Squidhat, info@squidhatrecords.com)

VARIOUS ARTISTS: *The New Wave of the Grave New Beat Vol. 2:* CD
Compilation albums are often seen as graveyards for a band's throwaway tracks but when done right a compilation can be a smorgasbord of undiscovered treasures. *The New Wave of the Grave New Beat*'s second installment features seventeen of the world's best anarcho, d-beat, crust, and raw d-beat bands under the subgenre umbrella of Grave New Beat (a reference to Discharge's most polarizing and panned album *Grave New World*). Shit gets fierce and doesn't let up from top to bottom with standouts like Gaze, Thisclose, Final Fucker, Endless Grinning Skulls, and Paranoid leading the pack. The sequencing and flow of the comp seems to move along quite nicely with all of the bands adhering to the mission statement included in the booklet: this style is not only not palatable to mainstream society but is also not a fucking industry to exploit. Perhaps the only three bands adhering to the *Grave New World* aesthetic (Soft Dov, Randy Shades Band, and Indian Nightmare) could also be the ones with the most original offerings and in doing so break up what could have otherwise been a stylistically monotonous track arrangement. My only complaint is that this wasn't pressed to vinyl but I find comfort in knowing that most, if not all, of the bands featured here have slabs of wax waiting for me to buy. Cheers. –Juan Espinosa (Our Future, ourfuturerecords.bandcamp.com)

VARIOUS ARTISTS: *Typical Girls Volume 2:* LP
I've been obsessed with this compilation for a couple of months now. The concept is simple—current female-fronted bands. Whenever someone asks me for new recommendations, I always point them to *Typical Girls Vol 2*. There is literally one song on it that I always skip. Everything else is great and I can usually find something that fits my mood. It's all punk-oriented but it goes through just about every subgenre except for the heavier/crustier side. I would be surprised if there's not something for everyone (with good taste) in here. –Nicole X (Emotional Response)

VICTORY: *SOS:* LP
Solid, hardcore-leaning streetpunk from Minneapolis. While some songs lean on the typical streetpunk tropes of revolution, loyalty, and of course, drinking—all quality songs, mind you—it's when they get a little political that they catch my attention. "Enemy of the State" is an excellent protest song against the NSA and governmental violations of our right to privacy as a free people. "SOS" cites the police for excessive violence but also calls out a complacent citizenry, unwilling to really risk anything to fight against injustices like these. "They say it's up to us, I say it's up to you. If you're sitting on the couch, there's nothing you can do." –Chad Williams (Pirates Press / Longshot / Oi! The Boat / Rebellion)

WET THE ROPE: *The Sum of Our Scars:* 12" EP
Wow. Folks from old emo acts like Sinker, Amber Inn, and Platypus Scourge (!) get together to make what is apparently a concept record focusing on sexual assault. The lyrics are pretty obtuse, dark, brutal—though "I'll Follow You All the Way to Your Fiery Grave" is a minute-long burner consisting of the sole lyrics, "I promise to ruin you." All told, it's a fierce, dense, pummeling, barb-heavy record penned by a bunch of dudes who've been around long enough to know *exaaaaactly* what they're doing. Not terribly sonically dynamic, but bricks to the head rarely are. Kudos for exploring a tough issue without being exploitative or gross. –Keith Rosson (Adagio830)

WILD BILLY CHILDISH: *"I Remember...":* LP
This record isn't brand new, but new enough to me. There were some release delays (but the good folks at M'Lady's persevered) plus my own laziness that delayed this record in finding its way into my home. Billy Childish is one of my musical heroes. (It's no understatement to say there would be no '80s or '90s garage punk if it wasn't for Mr. Childish. I'm not talking that Paisley Underground blech, but the raw efforts of a bunch of Thee bands... Milkshakes, Mighty Caesars, Headcoats, et cetera. begat "budget rock" and its ilk.) I own a lot of Childish-related records, but in this current economic climate I have to ask myself, "Do I need another one?" The answer is always yes, even when it's no. A reissue of a solo Childish LP from 1988, *"I Remember..."* is a twelve-song blues romp, and I was

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surprised to find each tune is a Childish original. I've long been hesitant about white guy blues, as I was traumatized as a teen by my "musician" friends who worshiped at the altar of some awful Erics (Clapton and Johnson.) Ugh.... Anyway, Childish's voice, his home recording aesthetics, and plebeian lifestyle are of a folksy, bluesy tradition. There are some songs that would work as Caesars or Headcoats rockers ("I Remember," "Not Many of My Kind") and some that seem to have been works in progress at the time of recording ("No 2 People Built the Same," "Come Love"). M'lady's released another Childish solo effort from this same era that's next on my list. –Sal Lucci (M'lady's, mladysrecords.com)

WINEBOX INQUIRY, THE: *Sets Sail!:* CS

Acoustic indie pop from New Zealand with occasional strings and some nice hooks here and there. I wish I knew more about Flying Nun/C86 type indie rock so that I could name some interesting influences, but this just sounds like Bright Eyes to me. –Chris Terry (forwardfast.bandcamp.com)

WOOD CHICKENS: *Skunk Ape:* 7"

A skunk ape is also known as a "swampsquatch," Florida Bigfoot, or Louisiana Bigfoot that smells badly. Even though the Wood Chickens are from Madison, Wis. and skunk apes are said to live in the Southeastern U.S., their EP opens with a song about a skunk ape on their property that they can't get rid of. If energetic cowpunk and swamp creatures are your thing, check out this three-song 7" with southern influences. –Cynthia Pinedo (Kitschy Manitou, kitschymanitou.com)

XETAS: *The Tower:* LP

When opener "The Gaze" winded me within the first ten seconds, I knew that I'd be chasing my breath for the entire record. Xetas, from Austin, Texas, packs the aural wallop of Brat Kings and Pissed Jeans, with vocals sharp enough to cut to the marrow. During "The Tower," they howl, "There is no exit here," and the gnarled delivery sends chills down my spine. Their scorching guitar riffs (more hardcore than metal), thunderous basslines, and surgically precise drumming bore into my cerebellum, inducing spastic gyrations and cult-like fervor. *The Tower* is controlled destruction like watching a derelict building implode (I'm reminded of the urgency and mania of Hüsker Dü's *Zen Arcade*). Xetas brings you right to the cliff's edge, but you're safely fastened by their restraint; they never indulge in twinkly interludes or melodrama, instead fueling a rage that lasts for the album's nearly forty-minute duration. "The Machine," an equally bleak and poppy closer, encapsulates the trio's philosophy in its chorus: "Get me off this life support. I'm fine." At any moment, Xetas might explode—but being within the blast radius is well worth the risk. –Sean Arenas (12XU)

YOUNG CONSERVATIVES: *Non Exist:* 12"

Young Conservatives: two words guaranteed to set most punks' hackles up in anger. This Yorkshire-based hardcore outfit has bottled up a shitload of anger and unleashed it under a moniker which will no doubt catch some people off guard. However, from the opening guitar riff of "Crushed beneath an Iron Fist" it's apparent that Young Conservatives have nothing in common with the political leanings of a similarly named entity in the U.K. This record is an explosion of bile and rage, commensurate to the hatred and scorn directed towards Prime Minister Theresa May, a hideous human being, most deserved of her role as target. With more in common with the likes of Black Flag and Minor Threat than with any of its contemporaries, Young Conservatives deal in dirty and gritty songs, which ideally would be experienced up close as bodies flail and slam into each other, creating a unifying and positive force. I'm writing this the day before the general election, so ahead of that I'd like to add, FUCK THE TORIES! –Rich Cocksedge (Total Recall, jimmythemags@gmail.com, totalrecallrecords.tumblr.com)

YOUR PEST BAND: *Old Springhead:* 2 x LP

Double LPs are often a gamble. Either they're a winding road worth traveling (*Double Nickels on the Dime* and *Zen Arcade* come to mind) or a grueling experience that would have benefitted from heavy edits. Your Pest Band's *Old Springhead* falls somewhere in the middle. I like Tokyo's Your Pest Band. I've enjoyed (and reviewed) a handful of their releases, but their brand of vocal cord-shredding garage pop can be exhausting. Listening to all four sides back-to-back made my brain hurt. There are clear highlights, though. Side A's "Found Out" is a heartfelt pop gem, with the right amount of attitude, while Side B's "Exits" and "Still Alive" spit and snarl like Teengenerate. "Panama," a scorching rager, kicks off Side C, and "Wheels" might be the most lush and hypnotic song Your Pest Band has every written; its '50s pop melodies warm me up like a blanket. However, Side D's "Swell," the fifteen-minute penultimate track, doesn't do it for me. Although at times astoundingly epic and dense, it's equally tuneless and tedious. If Your Pest Band had jettisoned the filler songs, then they would have had a killer LP on their hands. As it is, *Old Springhead* felt like an endurance test—that I failed. –Sean Arenas (Brassneck, brassneckrecords.bigcartel.com / Dead Broke, deadbrokerecords.com / Snuffy Smiles)

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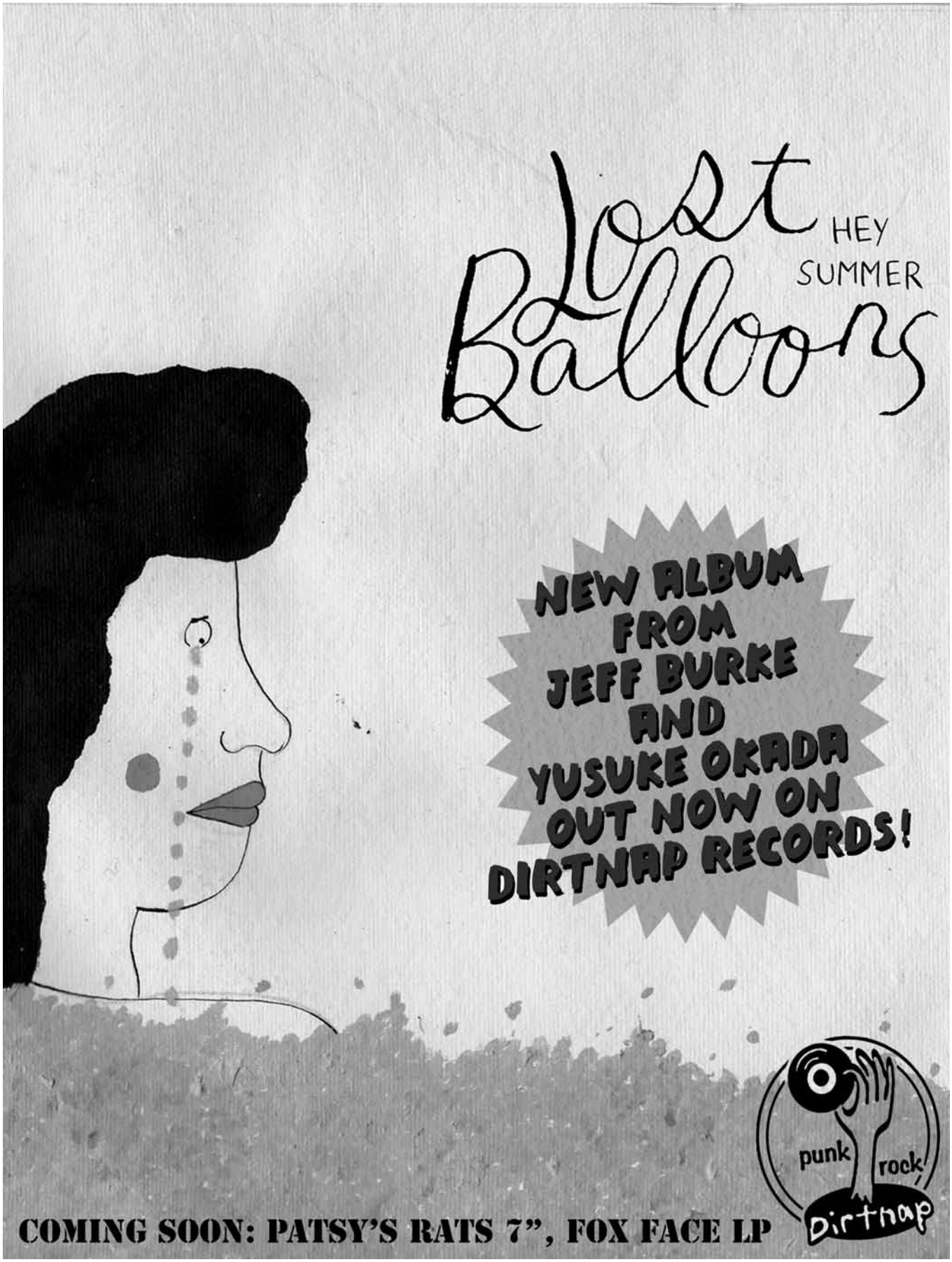
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I'm not completely convinced that it needed to happen, but it's fine.

–Indiana Laub
A PERFECT DAY FOR SCOTTIE PIPPEN

CAKE & COMIX #2: SHORT STORIES,
?$, 4¼" x 5½", 12 pgs.
I thought I hated poetry and then I read this. It's a collection of vignettes and flickers of the past. Arranged from beauty to pain, contrasting and amazement with damage and hurt, this zine gives the reader snapshots of a life experienced. It's as if I were flipping through Polaroids taken fleetingly in the moment, yet instead of reading the thousand words weighted in a photograph, I get a peek into the emotional state of the documentarian. Each passage, regardless of length, took me to a moment in time and shared the feelings and observations of the writer without a need for context or backstory. Were this two-dimensional graphic art, this zine would serve as an illustrator's sketch book, yet the thoughts are expertly fleshed out. The author plays with their words like a child with its food and manages to turn the mundane into something appetizing. I find this work endlessly impressive, masterful, and brilliant. Creative writing at its best wonder. No piece is longer than a few hundred words, but it leaves me satiated each time. It feels like pillow talk with a partner you're in love with who answers emotionally and honestly to the question, "What are you thinking?" Definitely worth seeking out. –Kayla Greet (Cake & Comics, mmmmatranga@gmail.com)

DIARO #5 / ROMANCERO HINCHADO #3, $?, 5½" x 8½", 14 pgs.
Mari Santa Cruz and Ana Ortiz Valera are Latinx writers who help organize *la Liga,* a digital art zine of sorts, and this is their split zine. Cruz's side features a series of prose poems printed over pictures of home, family photos, and line drawings. Valera's romanceros, or folk ballads, are surrounded by collaged photo cutouts and address varied topics—the Virgin Mary, Valera as a young girl, and the United States. Mari Santa Cruz's voice is driving. In *Diaro*, Cruz writes "TO UNDERSTAND MY MOTHER IS TO UNDERSTAND MYSELF. TO UNDERSTAND MY MOTHER'S BEHAVIOR INFORMED MY GRANDMOTHER'S ACTIONS IS TO UNDERSTAND MYSELF [AND] TO UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT THAT GENERATED [THEM] MAKES ME […] HEAL, FORGIVE AND IMPROVE." Conversely, Ana Ortiz Valera's poems in *Romancero Hinchado* are a little more winding and textured: "Virgencita, tu alguna vez te perdiste?" begins one. "La mía no se perdio, a mi me la arrancaron. Ese dia que maldeci mis partes rosas; el dia que dejaron de sentirse honestas y se hicieron sal."* The combined effect makes for a good poetry zine. Check out the digital component, *la Liga,* to see what else these writers are up to. *(My dumpy translation: "Virgencita, did you ever get lost? / I didn't get lost, I got ripped off. / That day I cursed my pink parts; / The day they stopped feeling honest and made salt.") –Jim Joyce (laligazine.com, anaortizvarela@gmail.com)

DITHERING DOODLES #42, 5 ½" x 8 ½", copied, 31 pgs.
This is a zine full of artistic renderings of VHS covers. Some illustrations are from actual movies rescued from a long-closed video store and some are imagined. For fans of good and bad art, as in good drawings and schlock movies. –Craven Rock (premiumdeluxe@hotmail.com)

FLUKE #14, $6, 8 ½" x 11", copied, 46 pgs.
Part two of the look back at Little Rock, Ark., punk history from the 1980s into the early 1990s. This issue is made up of show flyers, printed full page, featuring local and touring bands that played one location, 7th and Chester, which changed names over the years. Some of the bands that appear on the flyers are Fugazi, All, Holy Rollers, Flaming Lips, Green Day, Chino Horde, Trusty, and Econochrist. The intro includes a newspaper clipping of the audience at a Black Flag show (apparently, the famous "Peach" from the Rollins spoken word *Big Ugly Mouth* set in the photo). I'm always interested in the histories of local scenes, especially the scenes that were not as high profile as California or New York. I'm hoping Matt will uncover more Little Rock punk history in issues to come. I'm pretty sure there were bands happening prior to the era he covers. (Russell Love from NOTA was from there and Econochrist were from there before moving to the East Bay at the end of the 1980s, so there has to be more). –Matt Average (PO Box 1547, Phoenix, AZ 85001)

FLUORAZINE #1, free, 5½" x 8½", copied, 24 pgs.
Zine done from someone incarcerated, which means resources were pretty limited. So you've got a lot of cut and past collage work and a few song lyrics, comics, and mini-essays all written in ballpoint pen. All told, it comes across as that very familiar first issue that many of us have put out in our experiments with zines. Like most first issues, it's super thin on content, and I'd really urge the author to spend some time drumming up some solid stuff, be it art, essays, whatever. As someone in the prison system, he's in a unique position to inform a ton of us about something that I'm personally pretty ignorant of, but would really be interested in learning more about. But hey, collages are cool, too. Here's hoping he sticks with it. –Keith Rosson (Kristopher Storey, 26731-018 FMC, PO Box 14500, Lexington, KY 40512)

FUCK TRUMP CLUB #3,
11" x 14", $6 for monthly newsletters, one sheet, copied, 2 pgs.
A newsletter dedicated to sticking it to the fascist Cheeto and his covfefe (Hah, just trying to be the first to say it in a zine!). The brevity of it won't get you a lot of in-depth critique, but I think the point is to remind you to stay vigilant and to keep fighting. Six bucks gets you in the *Fuck Trump Club* and you'll get one of these every month. Well worth it if you ask me. One thing: I hope they keep pictures of his horrible, smug face to a minimum (there was only one behind a "no" sign in a corner of this issue). We all have to see it too much as it is—we don't need it in our mailbox. I'll take the cute butt with "Fuck Trump" written on it, any day, misguided as it may seem. With that, I'm off to join the club. –Craven Rock (Fuck Trump Club, PO Box 30272, Albuquerque, NM 87190)

GOODBYE (OR THE STATE OF NATURE), $6, 4" x 5½", 88 pgs.
A short eighty-eight panel thought comic that waxes philosophical on the human condition. I can't draw any conclusion over the questions being asked but maybe it's about anarchy? This reading is supported only by the giant pile of bodies making out and forming an A with a circle around it featured on the last page. The comic is well drawn and humorous, reminding me a bit of modern alt comic darlings Jesse Moynihan and Michael DeForge. Narratively, it's structured as a series of short vignettes of people making changes to themselves. The comic captures the struggle for growth in a parade of comedy sketches at the rate of one panel a page. Recommended if you see a copy at your local zine fest. –Bryan Static (Ben Passmore c/o Silver Sprocket, 1057 Valencia St., SF, CA 94110, silversprocket.net)

GRATITUDE #2*,* $6, 11" x 8½", offset, 32 pgs.
Here's a testament to the power of a good zine: if it's written well enough, I really don't care what it's about, I'll still be enrapt by it. *Gratitude* is all about straight edge and hardcore—two things I give a marginal shit about at most—and it's absolutely one of the best things I've read in forever. Seriously, this zine is awesome. McGuire and the friends he enlists to write for him are all hilarious and super knowledgeable about the dumb minutiae of hardcore, and they joyously revel in all of it. The fun is contagious, man. He reviews the top five brick walls in hardcore, sends his friends mystery tapes and has them write lengthy reviews of the songs, does antagonistic/absurd interviews with various bands and pens lengthy, stupidly detailed record reviews and bullet-pointed essays about the different mixes of Youth Of Today records. The writing is stellar and funny and inviting to everyone, even if you don't entirely get one hundred percent of the references. Seriously, this thing is straight up magic. Favorite thing I got this issue. Heartily recommended. –Keith Rosson (Gratitude c/o AJ McGuire, 10 Cypress Park, Melrose, MA 02176)

GUERRILLA ARTFARE #1, 8 ½" x 11", offset, full color, 51 pgs.
This is the first issue of *Guerrilla Artfare*, a slick Salt Lake City zine whose mission is "unite your spark with the entirety of our community and nothing will be able to silence our desires, dreams and passions." I love the gorilla on the cover. The spare color scheme reminds me of screen-printed show posters. In a longer article, they present theories on outer space, ranging from the more sound to total wackjob ones that suggest there is no outer space because the world is flat. (Please note, they take no position on any theory). There's an article on the health benefits of marijuana, one on the Dakota Access Pipeline, one about one about slimeball Sheriff Arpaio, who has a literal concentration camp for immigrants in Arizona. You also get an article about evidence of giants or Nephilim found in a cave. There's a super fringe conspiracy theory on chemtrails and nanobots. You also get some agitprop art, a crossword puzzle, and some poetry. With all of its unapologetic weirdness, *GA* is also trying to be a free community zine, not unlike an alternative weekly, so it also reviews small coffee shops to large concert halls and has event listings. I found this part charmingly confused, from the way they encourage the reader to "get up and go DO! Experience something beyond your Boob Tube" when it comes to arty stuff. However, in the sporting events listing they couldn't help but to toss in "give them bread and circuses." My only critique is that the articles just seem to start, without any standout title or thesis. That was jarring. Otherwise, it felt like spending a few days in SLC with a fun, ziney, weirdo showing you around. Stay cool, guerrillas! –Craven Rock (guerrillaartfare.com)

Here's a testament to the power of a good zine: if it's written well enough, I really don't care what it's about, I'll still be enrapt by it.... He reviews the top five brick walls in hardcore.

–Keith Rosson | GRATITUDE #2

HELL 99, $?, 8½" x 11", fold-out mini comic, 1 pg.
This black and white, fold-out mini comic features a three-panel backstory on a samurai and the dark pact that drives him to revenge. The end of the preview includes a QR code. If followed (or you can go to the website), it brings you to an animation of the conclusion of the first episode. I recommend it for any fans of gritty, old school samurai and kung fu films. –Tricia Ramos (Hell 99, 2016 Hillcreek Rd., Collinsville, IL, chanbaragogo.com)

LATE BIRTHDAY PRESENT, THE, $3, 5½" x 8½", 55 pgs.
I can't tell if this is fiction or a real story with some elephant-sized embellishments, but in a basic sense, Sean's zine is about a dude named Sean dealing with the loss of his best friend who died of an overdose—and perhaps the bigger picture is about trying to live with and love people who suffer from addiction— which seems like an undervalued conversation that I wish more writers engaged with. The title refers to one of Sean's buddies, this guy Jessie, and Jessie's young friend and birthday boy, Mike. It turns out Jessie missed Mike's big day, but his late present, enacted by Sean, is to take Mike to the circus. They want to see the elephants on their last performance. Sean's zine makes for a good read—a bit zany like Richard Brautigan with his crazy similes and absurd topics of conversation (there's a recurring gag with a Tommy Bahama shirt), but the narrator is never too far from laying on the heavy stuff and reminding the reader that all this craziness—heavy boozing and rambling around in his truck high as a kite—has been a way of grappling with one friend's death and another's slide into serious addiction. What else can I tell you? Well, they steal an elephant. Bonus point for all the Crimpshrine references. –Jim Joyce (Sean Dunne, AN4246, PO Box 905, Avenal, CA 93204)

MAXIMUM ROCK'N'ROLL #408, $4.99, 8½" x 11", 98 pgs.
To be perfectly honest, it's been a number of years since I've picked up an *MRR*. It never quite gripped me like I wanted it to, and though I realize that every issue is unique, I just haven't developed a habit of reading it. This issue had a few things that did really grab my attention—largely in the columns section. Overamped is a new column by someone who works directly in harm reduction. The piece in this issue is largely introductory to the subject matter, though it also plants the necessary seeds for destigmatizing drug use and the importance of restoring humanity to users. Having volunteered for the People's Harm Reduction Alliance personally, I was very endeared to this piece. Another of note is Teaching Resistance wherein radical and subversive educators share their pedagogy and tactics. This particular issue covered current day college-level students and their perspectives on the Black Panther movement, including dispelling falsehoods. One thing I still don't get about this fanzine is why columnists are compelled to recount record reviews in their allotted space. Save that for the review section! Band interviews include acts such as Reptile Ranch, Zone Infinie, Ataxxia, and Street Eaters. While I understand that it makes me sound jaded and out of touch, much of the music *MRR* covers is not familiar to me, though I consider that a positive. It's crucial to step outside of your comfort zone when the opportunity presents itself. All in all, it's a good issue and enjoyable read. It didn't quite make me a subscription convert, but it did make me mindful to pick up a copy more often. –Kayla Greet (Maximum Rock'n'roll, PO Box 460760, SF, CA 94146-0760, mrr@maximumrocknroll.com)

MINOR LEAGUES #3, $5, 7" x 9", 62 pgs.
Simon Moreton's latest comic zine from Bristol, England deals with the death of his father, which, as far as a stranger's loss goes, is meaningfully rendered with a lot of textless panels: illustrations of the author going through his day, sort of bewildered and silenced by grief. You walk through the world, but you can't say you're as in it as the people around you. Moreton's slow pacing and spare illustrations are beautiful. I keep looking at them and wondering, how did he make that picture of a cityscape with so few lines? How'd I know that's a picture of him in bed when there are so few details? The content is pretty heavy, but that's life, and I'd gladly read *Minor Leagues* regardless of topic. Check it out if you're at all into good perzines and autobiographical comics. –Jim Joyce (smoo-comics.com)

MISHAP #36, $2 or trade, 5 ½" x 14", copied, 34 pgs.
The latest issue of *Mishap* has Ryan reflecting on the incredible series of events that came with Donald Trump's election as President of the United States. While this is a personal zine, it's also political. The two mesh very well. I never felt as though I was being preached to or that Ryan was being heavy-handed in his writing. Sure, he's liberal, but it's stated in such a way as to express his thoughts and feelings rather than trying to convert anyone. In addition to his thoughts on the election, Ryan also has a great list of recommended books from 2016, his experiences with his sexuality, and a look at what men can do to stop rape culture. Sometimes I get zines to review that seem so short or without depth that I wonder, "Why did this even get made?" *Mishap,* however, has just the right amount of content that is also engaging and inviting. If you're looking for a political punk perzine, here it is. –Kurt Morris (Mishap, PO Box 5841, Eugene, OR 97405)

NO EXPOSURE #3, $3, 5½" x 8½", 50 pgs.
Aside from the cover (on which a dude drinks beer from a sneaker) this zine from Perth, Australia, was written entirely by typewriter with neat borders and tiny text boxes. Nearly every page features intimate photos shot on the writer's Olympus OM-1, a camera "that a guy at work gave [him] for free." He reviews twenty-nine albums and a book, interviews Daniel Lupton, the head of Sorry State Records (among other things, Lupton makes a good argument for not reprinting classic records), talks with power crusters Territory, and assembles a great guide to Tokyo's record stores. I can't believe one guy's doing all this, but he is. At one point, the author laments that Perth has "a load of art student/'per'-zines" and not enough "music-centric punk 'zines," but holy shit, if Perth has only one music zine as beautiful and content-thick as *No Exposure*, that's still pretty good. Only $3. Recommended. –Jim Joyce (No Exposure, PO Box 284, Maylands, WA 6931, Australia)

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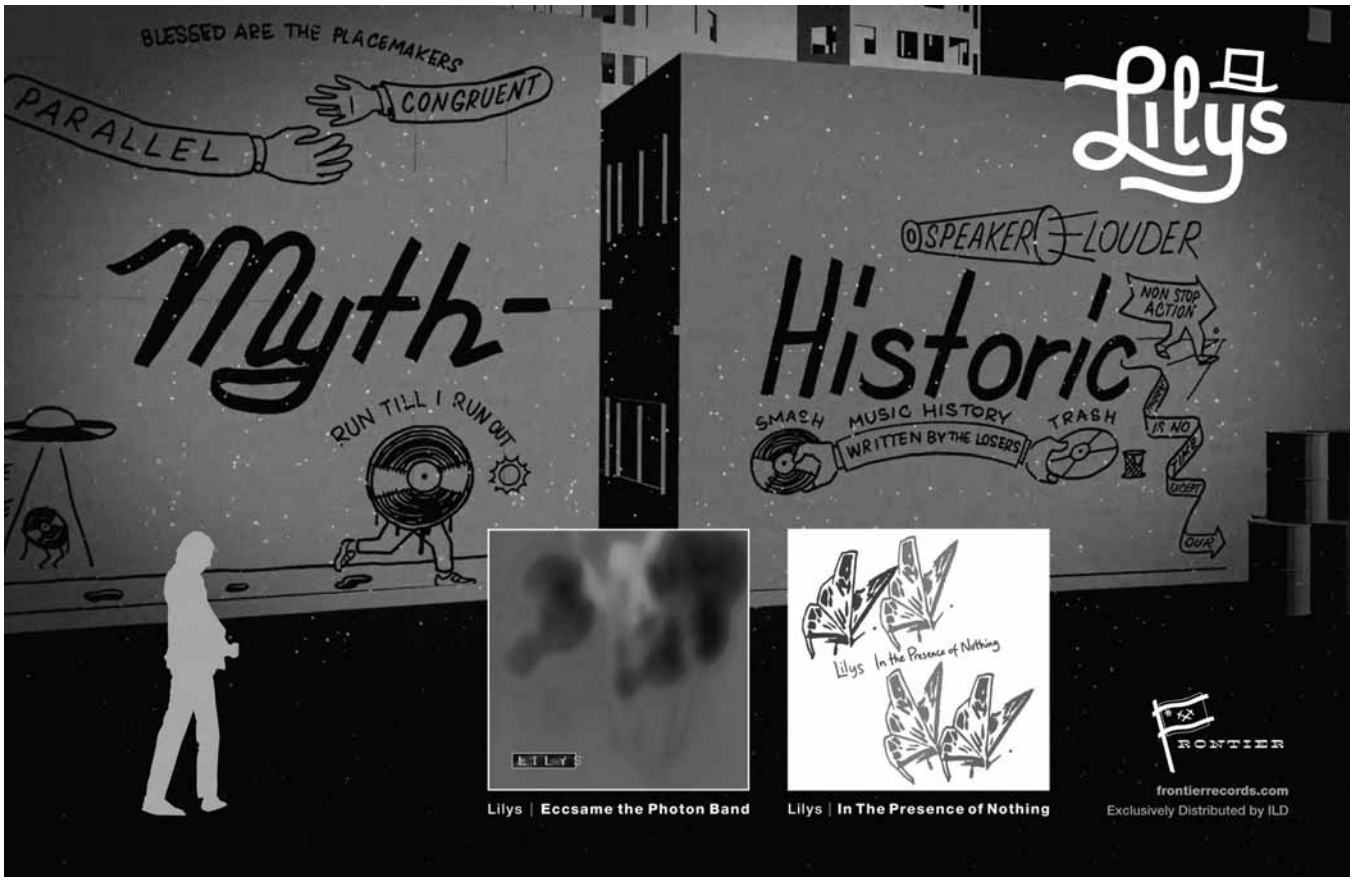

OUR FUTURE, VOL 1 NO 1, $?, 8½" x 5½", newsprint, 23 pgs.
This zine's stated purpose is to dive deep into obscure music topics. Here, the focus is on Extreme Noise Terror and their collaboration with British dance band KLF. I admit to being initially reluctant about this one because of the subject matter, but editor Rodney Shades conducts an excellent interview with ENT's Mark Bailey, illuminating the unlikely match of electronic dance with grindcore. A fine debut, and one that promises continued excellence. –Michael T. Fournier (thisclose86@gmail.com)

PERFECT DAY FOR SCOTTIE PIPPEN, A, $2, 4" x 5½", 20 pgs.
I feel like I was just tricked into reading Scottie Pippen fan fiction. It's a short story about a person waking up in their filth, eating a Pop-Tart, and then shooting the shit with the eponymous basketball star. I could make wild guesses about the meaning of Scottie Pippen. Perhaps he's a metaphor for unfulfilled desires. Or maybe it's just Scottie Pippen fan fiction. As with all Scottie Pippen fan fiction, I assume, it is also filled with freshman composition college writing. Lots of adverbs and an allergic avoidance of contractions that makes the text sound stiff and afraid to be too common. I wish I had something positive to say, but I really just can't see the point. –Bryan Static (Steve Orth, Cookie Books, steveorth25@gmail.com)

PERFECT DAY FOR SCOTTIE PIPPEN, A, $2, 4¼" x 5½" copied, 20 pgs.
This zine is a very short story that is kind of like joint fan fiction of (as the title suggests) NBA star Scottie Pippen and the J.D. Salinger story "A Perfect Day for Bananafish." I'm not completely convinced that it needed to happen, but it's fine. The narrator uses this disaffected, casually observant voice that is very difficult for me not to slip into now that I've just read this whole thing. Apart from the two unlikely subjects suggested in the title, the story is really mostly a meditation on the hypermundane—is stuff like this still called alt-lit? I don't know, but there's considerable discussion of Pop-Tarts and reality television. –Indiana Laub (Cookie Books, steveorth25@gmail.com)

PROOF I EXIST #26, $3, 4¼" x 5½", copied, 90 pgs.
Editor Billy chronicles a tour by his band Rudest Priest. Tour diary zines have been done to death; this one transcends the traps of the genre. Billy does a nice job blending bios of his band members with reflections on shows, travel, gender neutral pronouns, musical ability, and Steinbeck. Warm and inviting throughout—this one's a winner. –Michael T. Fournier (No address listed)

RIOT 77 #19, €3, 8" x 11½", 44 pgs.
Irish punk fanzine, *Riot 77* covers underground music; primarily of the punk rock variety. This new issue contains giant interviews with Richie Ramone, Flamin' Groovies, The Ruts, Walter Lure, and Johnny Moped. Also included are book, DVD, and record reviews. A pretty packed punk magazine, straight from Dublin. –Tricia Ramos (Riot 77, PO Box 11342, Dublin 2, Ireland, riot77magazine@hotmail.com)

RUM LAD #10, £2, 5¾" x 8", A5, 16 pgs.
Wow, this is filled to the brim for a sixteen-page diary comic. (I remember Steve Larder's art from the cover for one of the issues of *As You Were*.) It's gorgeous when he draws big, detailed pictures and charming when he draws simple doodles. Personally, I would kill for a longer work in either style. Here we get them mish-mashed together on every page, the doodles providing the jokes with the intricate pieces setting the scene. The narrative is a tour diary about the bands touring the U.K. and listening to Slayer. It's easy to use Snakepit as a reference point, but this one has a different sense of flow in its scope. Days become paragraphs and pages and linear time doesn't mean as much. It's a good read, even if you just want to look at the drawings. –Bryan Static (Steve Larder, etsy.com/uk/shop/rumladzinesandart)

SCARPA FLOW: A TRAVEL ZINE #1, $?, 5½" x 8½", copied, 6 pgs.
Burnt out from working their ass off all the time with not much of a paycheck to show for it, the author of *Scarpa Flow* made a decision in 2008 to quit their job and get on a train to see the country. The plan was to ride the Amtrak and see four cities in four weeks, to see four different friends. This first issue documents the very beginning of the trip riding through Washington to Illinois, finally landing in Cincinnati, Ohio. On the train, they meet drunken creeps trying to lure them to their compartments, married couples, a professor, and some partiers. Riding the train allows for lots of time getting to know people and their stories. This first issue came out a long time ago, so I'm really hoping we'll see the rest of the four-week trip documented in zine form soon! –Tricia Ramos (Scarpa Flow: A Travel Zine, kayluh@gmail.com)

SCENE & HERD: KEEPING PERSPECTIVE #8, 2 ¾" x 4 ¼", copied, 6 pgs.
A short inspirational mini with cute illustrations to encourage you to keep your head up. The perfect sort of zine to slip into letter or greeting card envelopes. A quick one, but $1.25 gets you five issues. –Craven Rock (brantzwoolsey.tumblr.com)

SPIDDER #18, 5½" x 8½", 24 pgs.
A smattering of comics, prose, and interviews in a neat twenty-page package. The comics were cute enough and eye catching enough to be satisfactory. Really, my biggest problem with this zine was the font size. I'm getting to be an old man now, and back in the early two thousands, I could read such a tiny text size and not strain my wrinkled old person brain. Now, I struggle to keep the words straight. I cannot condemn *Spidder* for this, but it did hinder my enjoyment. I think adding a little space between lines in the prose would improve the page composition significantly. Beyond that, it's a decent enough read. Also a fun interview with Your Pest Band is in here. –Bryan Static (Arkam, 1925 Hwy 69 South, Savannah, TN 38372, arkamrecords.net)

The death of his father is meaningfully rendered with a lot of textless panels.

–Jim Joyce | MINOR LEAGUES #3

SWINGKID FANZINE, THE #5,
Free printable PDF, 5½" x 8½", full color glossy, 80 pgs.
The Swingkid Fanzine is one cool read! It's a glossy, content-packed zine covering mostly music. If you ever were looking for punk, metal, or alternative bands across the globe, this is a good resource to turn to. The author manages to interview bands from locations such as Suriname, Kuwait, Hungary, Mexico, Morocco—honestly too many to count. There's also a mix CD included of bands that are in the issue! On top of the interviews, there's a really powerful multi-person interview with refugees who have come to Germany (which I believe is the author's location?), their reasons why they left their own country, and why specifically did they want to come to Germany. There's also a DIY-themed crossword and stickers included in the issue. If you're interested, the zinester offers a free PDF if you email them! –Tricia Ramos (The Swingkid Fanzine, kamillentee.waldesruh@web.de)

TRUST #182, €3, 8" x 11½", 66 pgs.
Well, ninety-five percent of this big ol' "punk/hardcore/underground" zine is in German, but I still drooled over the layout. If the Australian music zine *No Exposure* has an intricate, brittle, and almost claustrophobic tightness to it, then *Trust* feels like a livestream of some across town party. The photos bleed off the page and crackle with light streams. Other cool aesthetic choices, like their page titles—oddly one of the only times English features in the whole zine—are printed in some variation of Helvetica that seems to have all its bones broken. This issue has interviews with Gunner Records, Cold Kids, and Al Quint. The review section gives Razorcake a few nice words, too. In the words of Bobby Hill, "I like ~~Jeff Gordon~~ [Trust], he's handsome!" –Jim Joyce (trust-zine.de)

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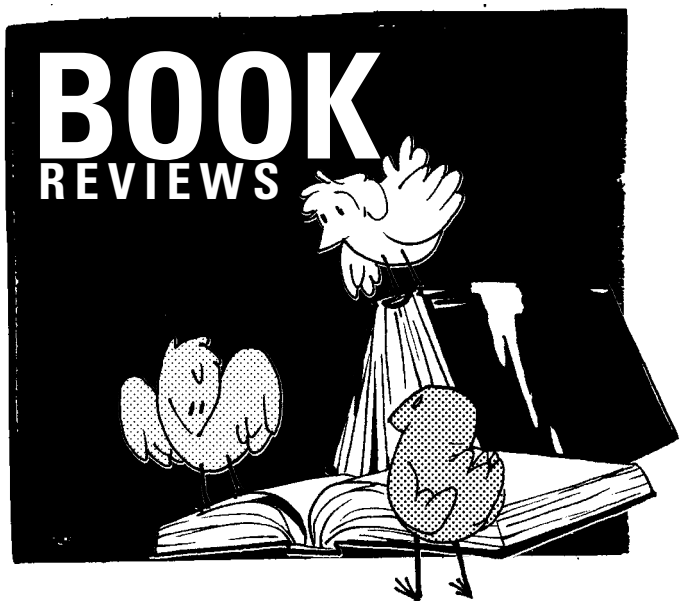


That is life: we are always in transition and we're always navigating social class.

–Kevin Dunn | *Everyone Loves You Back*

Everyone Loves You Back
By Louie Cronin, 253 pgs.

Here is the backstory, as I understand it, to this highly satisfying novel: Sean Carswell, co-founder of Razorcake and Gorsky Press, taught a college course focused on producing a novel. The class solicited and reviewed manuscripts, chose one, and saw it through the entire production process until publication. One of the manuscripts was submitted by Louie Cronin, who has worked for years on NPR's beloved "Car Talk" radio show. This submission was ultimately selected because one student cajoled her classmates to give the manuscript a read, eventually winning over the entire class. This backstory is not important for appreciating the novel, but I think it is important for reasons I'll get to.

Everyone Loves You Back follows Bob, a radio technician working the late night jazz show on a Boston radio station. There are also a number of charming and well-developed secondary characters, such as Riff, the hippie/jazz aficionado and radio host; Irene, a co-worker whose affections Bob tries to balance with his own desires for Leonie, a Harvard dance professor in his Cambridge neighborhood; plus, a rich collection of other quirky neighbors and co-workers that Bob has to navigate. There is also an army of aggressive squirrels, encouraged by one of Bob's loopier neighbors, and various trees that figure into the novel's narrative arc.

On one level, the novel is about transitions and the ways in which we all work to navigate changing terrains. The radio station is under new management and the jazz show is on the chopping block, so Bob and his co-workers (new and old) must work to juggle principles, paychecks, and priorities. Meanwhile, in his rapidly changing neighborhood, Bob lives in the house he grew up in, surrounded by Harvard professors and well-heeled upper-middle class eccentrics all trying to simultaneously preserve and promote what they think the neighborhood is and should be. The novel pivots between these two backdrops, combining subtle humor (the narrative thread about an elaborate health insurance scam is wonderful) and sharp insights.

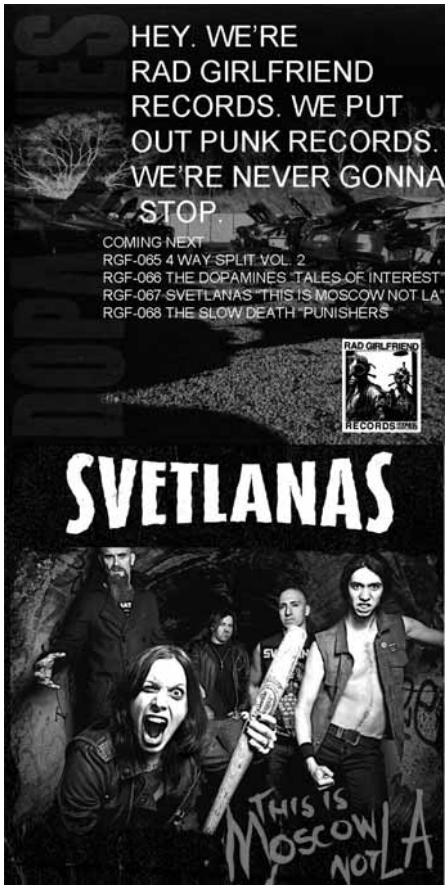
On another level, the novel is about social class. Those transitions in the radio station and neighborhood are ultimately informed by class dynamics. This is most clearly illustrated in Bob's dilemma between dating Irene or pursuing the more polished (read: bourgeois) Leonie, which would entail Bob's moving up in the class hierarchy. For me, it is Cronin's portrayal of these class tensions and disconnects that really animates the novel. Cronin clearly has her working class sympathies, but she is never heavy-handed in her descriptions nor does she fall back on simplistic narrative devices (e.g., "know your place" or "working stiff wins the princess").

About halfway through the novel, I started feeling a sense of dread, anticipating all the clichéd ways in which things could go off the rails for Bob. But I realized that Cronin respects her readers, assuming them to be intelligent enough not to need tired plot twists nor spoon-feeding shallow social commentary. The prose bounces and flows with an elegant pleasure that is impressive for a first novel. Ultimately, the novel is highly satisfying even though there are few resolutions and numerous strings left untied. Because, you know, that is life: we are always in transition and we're always navigating social class.

And here is the thing: I don't believe this novel would have ever been published by a large or even medium-sized commercial press. No one dies, commits adultery, is raped, suffers a mental breakdown, uses magic, fights monsters, or any other device that publishing companies find marketable today. Writing this review underscored for me how uneventful the story arc seems at first pass, but damn it, this novel works incredibly well. It is one of those novels that will linger with you for a long time, that you'll encourage your friends to read, that you'll gift at the holidays. It needs reading to appreciate, and kudos to that one student in Carswell's class who took the chance and championed this gem all the way through the production process. –Kevin Dunn (Gorsky Press, PO Box 12024, LA, CA, 90042)

Amnesty International annually releases a report documenting human rights violations for that year. Though not annual, Rebecca Solnit's books operate in roughly the same way for women's rights.

–Jim Woster | The *Mother of All Questions*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Mother of All Questions, The
By Rebecca Solnit, 176 pgs.

Amnesty International annually releases a report documenting human rights violations for that year. Though not annual, Rebecca Solnit's books operate in roughly the same way for women's rights. *The Mother of All Questions* takes those violations and offenses that populate our social media, removes them from that bustle, and reminds us of them in an isolated setting, adding her always welcome insight—not that I always agree with her (she just had to go and bring up Hemingway).

"Isla Vista." Remember what that refers to? What if I add "UC Santa Barbara?" Starting to come back to you? Remember the hashtag that grew from that event? That's one of the recent-past events that reading this book will more firmly affix to your memory.

The central essay is the almost fifty-page "A Short History of Silence," about the different silences that our society demands of women, men, and children. She also writes about the year 2014, "a year of feminist insurrection against male violence."

The above paragraphs may make it seem like *The Mother of All Questions* is a nutritionist-prescribed platter of raw vegetables, but really, it's your favorite vegan meal. It's the curried cauliflower soup I had at Ahimsa in Long Beach last weekend. –Jim Woster (Haymarket Books, haymarketbooks.org)

Painted Gun, The
By Bradley Spinelli, 267 pgs.

The Painted Gun starts out as an overly traditional detective novel—an investigator on the skids sits smoking in his office in 1997 San Francisco, a client sends him an odd package, and he says, "It isn't my birthday, and I don't believe it's the first of April," and later he gets slapped around and the slapper says, "Don't get smart with me. I don't like smart guys," and the investigator says, "What, they make you feel dumb?" and the slapper slaps him again.

The odd package is a portrait of the investigator that the investigator never sat for. The client wants him to find the artist. So is this a meta detective novel? Are we going to be examining the detective genre itself? Are the clichés there for a reason? Or is Spinelli amusing himself with what D.A. Powell calls "stinking dead usages of the past?"

The novel morphs into a conspiracy thriller. Fans of '70s films will perhaps recognize the root of the conspiracy from a movie whose title I'll leave out, since I'm sure neither Spinelli nor his pre-publication readers have seen it (or read the book it was adapted from), and in Spinelli's hands, the premise is arguably more plausible anyway (and if you don't watch '70s films, it's new to you).

And the mystery behind the portrait has a satisfying solution. But the novel's early prose is an incongruous candy-floss foundation for what follows, including Latin American political history.

The book has a great minimalist *moderne* cover by Meghan Carey Kates. –Jim Woster (Akashic Books, akashicbooks.com)

Placement of Character
By Bryan Polk, 318 pgs.

Bryan Polk's second novel starts out promising and enjoyable. It's the tale of a brother and sister, Mason and Eileen Jarman, who live in Denver. Both are in their mid-thirties and trying to figure out what they're doing with their lives. It's a struggle that many thirty-somethings face as their peers start pairing off and having children. This inability to find meaning while simultaneously flailing about in life is a subject in literature (both fiction and non-fiction) that has interested me since I read Douglas Copeland's *Generation X* about fifteen years ago.

As the book progresses, it enters a more surreal turn as Mason finds employment in character placement. As the book states, it's a vocation that provides "real life depictions of characters for fictional novels." The idea behind character placement is that someone wanting to write a novel can't come up with things in their own imagination and so pays people to act out what might happen minus a script. I had many questions about how realistic this would be (is it possible to have all the conversations recorded for the author? Wouldn't that ruin the ability of the actors to fully embrace their characters?)

I'm not sure I can follow along with a story where the evil intents of the spirit of a dead miner is thwarted by some punks who play They Might Be Giants and dance as "freaky" as they can.

–Kurt Morris | *Placement of Character*

At some point a headless spirit of a Colorado miner and a taking dog named Herman enter *Placement of Character* and that's when I realized the book was the equivalent of Kurt Vonnegut taking a bad left turn. Vonnegut was able to tear down the fourth wall and make surreal science fiction accessible and almost believable. Polk, on the other hand, starts with a relatable tale of figuring out what you should be doing with your life. From there he tries to solve the existential conundrum through the interaction of spirits and an ending that is so ham-fisted that he might as well have written, "GET IT?! Do you get it? See what I did there?"

Polk writes well and understands how to make a story flow. His characters are interesting, albeit with some flaws (Mason seems to be a punk but is also very concerned with society's opinion of him, which seems very antithetical to a punk ethos) and I would've been willing to follow them along a more realistic journey. That's not to say I dislike this type of fiction—I can get down with Vonnegut and others like him who play with reality. However, I'm not sure I can follow along with a story where the evil intents of the spirit of a dead miner is thwarted by some punks who play They Might Be Giants and dance as "freaky" as they can. –Kurt Morris (Suspect Press, 1280 Sherman St., Denver, CO 80203)

Rooted
By Idabell Allen, 320 pgs.

Think of this as a bit of Southern Gothic lit and a bit of *Steel Magnolias* if somehow a Stiv Bators analog was in the mix. *Rooted* takes place in the fictional town of Moonsock, Tenn. sometime in the late '70s. The sudden appearance of heretofore unknown grandson, junkie, and New York punker Slade sets off a chain of events, leading to upheaval of the carefully ordered façade that family Patriarch Grover McQuiston has built over time as one of the town's most feared and respected citizens.

While Grover is the boss of the family, it is his wife Eleanor who is the soul of the McQuistons. Even with her family falling apart around her due to the erosions of time—such as death, tragedy, and estrangement—it is her unfailing belief in patient redemption which marks the solid foundation that centers the family, even after her death. Eleanor is willing to take anyone in need, from her ultra anxious and closed-off granddaughter Sarah Jane who was abandoned years before, to her instant acceptance of Slade who turns

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–Adrian Salas | *Rooted*

up at the family property by crashing a car into Grover's prize cow Lucy at the end of a drug-fueled mad dash from New York City to claim an inheritance.

The novel shifts primarily between the viewpoints of Grover, Sarah Jane, and Slade. Each of these characters presents a different façade to the world. Grover is marked by a hard, demanding anti-sentimentality developed from years of trying to prove his worth as a respectable man. Slade is brash, crude, outspoken, and given to coping through addiction. Sarah Jane is painfully introspective and willfully sheltered to the point of near asceticism. Regardless of the surface differences, all three characters—and indeed almost all the extended members of the McQuiston family—are marked by two things: familial abandonment and long-term issues linked to secret traumas.

Allen steers the novel well in examining not just the corrosive aspects that mark the characters, but also redemption and hope. Her well-drawn depiction of the Mississippi River countryside of Moonsock conveys a sense of calmness that fortifies the characters through the peace they can experience in this natural Southern sanctuary. As best exemplified in Eleanor, there is also the strong thread permeating the novel of the power that familial connection has, even when frayed to near breaking points. While some of the family issues brought up in the novel seem like they probably can never be completely healed, it is worth the effort for the characters to push forward with forgiveness—if for no other reason than they recognize they are being dragged under by the weight of psychic burdens.

All in all, this novel is a well-structured read that rings true in its examination of the difficultly, tragedy, and sometimes tragi-comedy inherent in sorting out the complications of family. –Adrian Salas (Lowbrow Literary Press, 5050 Oakdale Rd., Westmoreland, TN, 37186, idabelallen.net)

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